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The Memoirs of Lili Weinberg

(A Holocaust Survivor)

Lili Montag
1976
Lili Weinberg.

I often find myself analyzing various human situations, questioning them, yet rarely finding an answer to any of them. Today I am sending my deepest and most cherished thoughts into the far past to gather a recollection of my life. Going back in time, I am reminiscing about Uzshorod, - Ungvar - my birth-place. Through the eyes of my soul I clearly visualize my hometown, remembering the simplicity and peacefulness of the city, and the wonderful excitements that we young people encountered there. Life was great with all it's promisses for a succesful future for most of us, - - or so we thought. We couldn't forsee the war, a most terrible of all wars, one that changed our lives, altered all our plans. It changed mine, I never reached my goals--- I never will!

I am in my late fifties, and I want my children to know all about me and my past. I want to acquaint them with the grandparents they never knew, and with the uncles and aunts they would have had had they not been anihilated during the Holocaust.

The apartment we lived in was a small one, consisting of a kitchen, two rooms and a terrace. My mother was a tall nicely shaped woman. She was quite pale in color, with large brown eyes that appeared saddened and compassionate most of the time. She suffered from frequent attacks of asthma, which caused her to look weak and tired. These attacks were more frequent after a hard day's work around the house. During the night I often heard the sound of her strained breathing while she stood near the wide open window gasping for fresh air. Frightened by the thought that she may suffocate and choke to death, I used to sit up in my bed. Silently I watched her silhouette in the dark, while she kept coughing, fighting for her breath. For just a second or two I stopped breathing, closing my mouth tight, squeezing my nose hard in order to experience the awful sensation of suf-focation.

Why didn't I go to her to comfort her? Where was everyone else? Couldn't they hear her, - - or was it too painful to see our mother suffer? My mother neve complained about her many sleepless nights. She never spoke about her discomfort;

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she accepted it as her way of life, never allowing it to interfere with all the work she had to complete by nightfall.

My mother seemed happiest and most comfortable among her relatives and friends from her small village Seredne. Her eyes lit up with a special glow and warm feelings as she opened her arms embracing her weekly visitors. Everyone loved and adored my mother. They would call her Pessel by her Jewish name, rather then Irma her birth name. To them she was known as "Pessel Ziese" (Sweat Pessel), and Pessel Ziese she was indeed! Other then being a tenderloving and concerned mother, she excelled in her merits by helping the needy. She was goodness, humbleness and simplicity in the most noble way. Whenever I think of the meaning of greatness, I think about my mother and her angelic ways. She had no luxuries, nor any fancy jewelry. Her clothes were simple as was her demure. Yes, she was a simple lady, but one with the noblest of hearts - that of giving. Many years ago I learned a rather melancholic Hungarian song. The lyrics to that old, sad song are most suitable in describing my mother.

"My mother doesn't own a silk dress
On my mother it wouldn't just look right
A dark headscarf is her only adorn
She bought it somewhere in a dimestore
My mother doesn't have any jewelry
The tears sparkling in her eyes
Are her diamonds.

My mother is such a simple woman
She doesn't know about new fashions
We spend together sleepless nights
And when I tell her of my heart -
aches, and my unhappy love
She quietly cries with me.
My mother is an incarnated goodness
Yet, at times I am bad to her.

I can vividly remember my first encounter with the kindergarten, facing the first trauma of being left alone among strangers. On a beautiful sunny day my mother and I walked hand in hand toward that white, mysterious house, surrounded by a spacious garden , the school playground. I was reluctant about entering this building, but my mother's reassuring words calmed me down. As we opened the classroom door, I shyly examined the faces of children like myself. I experienced fear and distrust in this new, strange environment and therefore stayed near my mother while she talked with the teacher. Just holding her hand tightly, not letting go for even a brief moment was the security I needed. As it came time for her to go, tears came rolling down my cheeks. She promised to return for me, but I kept grasping to her skirt moving along with her as she began to walk out of the room.

Veronica, the teacher's helper tried to befriend me. With a kind, cheerful smile she offered me a ride on the swing. This wasn't just an ordinary swing, it was a huge , luxurious most enchanting double swing, one that I had never seen before. Slowly it began to swing forward and backward tempting me to get on i I watched it move and became engrossed in taking a ride in it. My eyes were captivated by the motions of this wonderful swing, and I felt my hands loosening from my mother's skirt. Finally I separated from her. I got on the swing and began swinging high and higher, into an unforgetable fantasy that only a child can envision.

I attended kindergarten daily. It seemed, that the most important task for me was to dress up in pretty dresses. I would make demands on my mother, asking for a new dress, different socks, or more colorful ribbons. It didn't matter what it was, as long as I got something new.

I recall a day when I wore two dresses, one over the other. This was to satisfy my vanity. My mother didn't notice as I happily hurried to school in my new attire. During the dancing I was showing off my clothes, lifting up one skirt ther the other one. My dancing partner was quite amused and I felt terribly important. Later, when my mother found out what I did, she became very angry with me. She scolded me and in her fury she called me a "Kolelajka". I was too young to understand her unreasonable anger. I couldn't comprehend the meaning of this ridiculous word, but the tone of her storming voice made me feel awkward and ashamed of myself. I was humiliated for my actions, which only a few hours before I felt proud and important of.

As I grew older I longed for my mother to wear nicer and more fashionable clothes. She only had simple dresses, not one had the slightest mark of luxury. This bothered me, and I wondered was it that we couldn't afford anything better, or didn't she wish better things?

Whenever she managed to save up any money, she rushed Mickey to the nearby pharmacy. Her face lit up with excitement, her pale cheeks turned rosy, as she whispered the number of Epetonia pills he was supposed to purchase from Laszlo bacsi. It was the only sedative that controlled her asthma attacks, allowing her to breathe peacefully. She anxiously waited for Mickey's return, then hid the pills in a private place.

The entire procedure was done in secret so that my father wouldn't know. If he found out about the pills, a horrible fight would take place. He would turn red in the face, shouting and condemning her for buying the drug. He insisted that Epetonia had damaging side effects on her heart. She sat quietly allowing him to say whatever he wanted, not daring to contradict him.

I wonder, - - was it really harmful? I saw only it's good effects on her condition. Epetonia (the pill) relaxed her shaking body and stabilized her torn breathing. As the suffocating cough subsided, she became more comfortable. It was wonderful to look at her soft smiling face. How happy we were on those days! As I think back, I wish that I wasn't so young at her needy times. I am contente that Mickey was always there when she needed him so.

My joyful thoughts of my mother are countless. I am reminiscing about the times when she went to the hair dresser to get a permanent.She always took me along. It was quite a long walk from our house to Mr. Tussay's Beauty Parlor. Once we got there we still had to wait, since Mr. Tussay was a very busy man. I loved being there with my mother and I used to look forward with great anticipation to these special occassions.

Mr. Tussay (Tussay bacsi) was a blond vigorous little man, who was quite popular in his field. I enjoyed watching as he diligently worked, creating hairdos with his chubby little fingers. When it was my mother's turn, she was motioned to a big red chair. I watched intensely as she removed her hat from her soft brown hair. Tussay bacsi washed, trimmed and set her hair. As she relaxed under the hair dryer, glancing in the mirror I saw the reflection of my beautiful mother. When Mr. Tussay finished combing her hair, my mother sighed with approval. She reached for her hat and placed it carefully on her new hairdo. I wished she could have left the hat off, but she had no choice as she had to comply with the law governing the Orthodox Jewish religion.

As I became a woman and got married I often dreamed of my mother. In my dreams I would dress her in beautiful, expensive clothes, dresses she never had. Living in America made me feel like buying all those lovely garments the stores

offered and giving them to her, however I always seemed to awaken just before I could accomplish my goal. It seemed, as if I was challenged by some mysterious enemy, not allowing me to fulfill my dream.This dream reoccured over and over in different dimensions, but the essence of it was always the same. In one dream I actually took my mother to R.'s department store. We took the escalator to the second floor. We approached the department offering all those lovely dresses. We were so close, that we almost could feel the different textures in materials and see their luscious colors. Then suddenly my dream came to an abrupt end. I woke up with tears rolling down my face. I sobbed painfully for a long time, as I came so very close to reaching my goal and once again failed.About two years ago when again I had such a dream, I was able to buy my mother all those specia garments that I wanted her to have. Everything she wore was new and stylish.She looked absolutely beautiful. This was the first time I felt, that in some small way I took care of her needs. That morning I woke up full of joy. I felt relieved and I lit a "Jahrceit" (memory) candle in the memory of her dear soul. For so long I yearned to pamper her in luxuries, and now I finally was able to, even if it was only in a dream never to come true.

My father, "Apu" was a short, trim, extremely neat looking man.As far as I can remember he worked hard, so he could properly provide for his small family He kept himself in great shape and was well groomed from head to toe.His face was oval shaped, with deep brown almond shaped eyes, bushy eyebrows and a dark neatly trimmed mustache. His "salt and pepper" color curly hair was very short, parted on the left side. Being an Orthodox Jew he obided by the laws that required him to cover his head at all times. At home he wore a yarmulka, while in pub lic places he wore a hat. My father was born in Poland, in a tiny village called Vysocko Nizna.As a young boy he left this place and came to Csechoslowakia in order to better his future. He found work at "Stern's Co.", where he started out as a delivery boy and eventually worked his way up to salesman.

Hershel Diamantstein owned a "General Store" in Seredne, a small village near Ungvar. While placing orders for his store at Stern's, he spoke with my

father every week. He grew very fond of this ambitious young man, and eventually invited him to Seredne to meet his daughter Erma. Soon after a wedding took place in Seredne. This marriage, as so many other marriages of the time was based more on mutual convenience than on romance. My mother trusted her father's choice and agreed to become Mrs. Ludwig Montag. Her first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. A year later on March 24- I924 Mickey was born, two years later on May 9 - I926 my mother gave birth to me.

I was four years old when my little sister Agi was born. I remember the midwife F.neni arriving to our house, carrying a huge brown suitcase in her hands. She ordered me and Mickey outside, promissing that in a while we could see the baby, who was now sleeping in her large suitcase.

Agi, (Chajku) my little sister was born on March 24 - I930. She arrived prematurely after seven months of pregnancy, and was a small, fragile baby.The Hebre name Chaja means life. It was given to her so that she would draw strength from it. There was an old belief, that if a sick or weak person is bestowed by a special Hebrew name, they would live a long healthy life. We called her Chajku, just as we called Mickey - Majsu. Poor Agi lived a very short life in spite of all those blessings that were presented to her at her birth. My little sister was the gentlest, sweetest person one could imagine. She was beautiful in every aspect. She had dark almond shaped eyes, nicely shaped soft lips and delicate olive complexion. She wore her dark long hair in two braids.

Today is Saturday, - a Sabbath morning. Sabbath at home had a very speacial meaning to us. It was a day of rest, a day of joy, a day for family and friends visiting one another, and above all it was a day of spiritual chanting and praying. On this day we dressed in our best clothes, our Shabesz dresses. We ate specially prepared festive foods. The delicious meals were cooked and baked on Friday, since the Jewish laws forbade any sort of work on the Shabesz day.
Friday morning my mother started out by kneading dough, pareve and milchik.The pareve (non dairy) was used for the two large chales, one twisted and one oval shaped. The kitchen smelled wonderful from the tempting aroma of chicken soup, fish, kugel,compot and the most delicious kuchen, only my mother could bake.

We could hardly wait for the evening meal that started right after the "Kidush" prayers. On Friday at sundown my mother blessed the "Shabesz" candles, seven white candles. My father and Mickey , dressed in their Shabesz suits went to the "Shuhl" (temple) to attend the evening services. Only with their return Shabesz officially entered our home. We all observed it religiously, in a festive manner differentiating it from the everyday routine of the week. Oh, how I miss Shabath and my family!

Agi, my little sister always helped my mother in preparing for the Shabesz and other holidays. She did it eagerly, with a warm smile on her face. She never demanded anything, never hurt a soul. She was the most wonderful little girl. As I recall the past it seems that Agi and I hardly spent time together. When we were small children we played many games together, but as I grew older I became preoccupied with my school and studies. I didn't like to do any chores around the house, and I emphasized that I was a student, not a kitchen aid.

My father (Apu) was a selfeducated man. He had very little formal schooling, as he was so young when he left his native land, Poland. He learned to speak and write in three languages; Hungarian, Chech and German. His oversized desk was imaculate, and he kept all his documents in perfect order. He owned a "Korona Smith" typewriter, and did his business correspondence typing it himself.

After I completed five years of elemantary school, my father met with the principal to discuss further educational possibilities for me. I was to enter the Chech Gymnasium. To qualify, I had to pass an entrance exam test. I wanted very much to join this school, and therefore studied diligently to do well on the tests. We were thrilled when we learned of my passing grades. My father was very proud of me for doing well, and I too was extremely happy to become a "Primanka" (first grader) of this school of great status. In school I tried to live up to my father's expectations. I studied diligently, but the professor of Chech literature failed me during the first semester. No matter how hard I studied, no matter how much I tried, it was obvious that she disliked me and would not let me pull through. She was antisemitic and as such, she demanded greater performance from us Jewish students.

My father scheduled an appointment with her. I remember how anxiously I waited fo his return to inform me about my situation to be. When he finally came home, I could tell that he had bad news. He looked worried. He slowly removed his fur-lined coat and proceeded to tell me of professor Melicharova's advice. She suggested to transfer me into a regular public school with a lower academic program. If I remained in the Gymnasium, she may have to fail me again. I was terribly upset. I didn't want to terminate my education in the Gymnasium. I pleaded with my father to give me another chance to prove myself. In spite of the high cost of tuition I remained a student of this school for a while longer. . .

We moved from our first home to a more comfortable house in R. street. This was a larger appartment in a better section of the city. At first my mother was unhappy with this new enviroment. She often cried and could be comforted only by a weekly visitor from Seredne.

Seredne was a small, pleasant village about half hour from Uzshorod, if you traveled by taxi. Every year I would look forward to spending my summer vacation there, with my mother's large family. She had five brothers and a younger sister. There was Mano bacsi, Arje bacsi, Jassel, Chaim, Jankel bacsi (uncle Jack living in America) , and Regina neni. All my uncles were tall, strong, good looking men, but my uncle Chaim was the handsomest of all. I idolized him , and maybe in a way he was the first man I was secretly in love with. Regina neni, (my aunt) was a frail, soft spoken woman. She was a dear good soul, just like my mother. Her unfortunate marriage ended in a divorce, leaving her with two beautiful sons, Elemer and Jenoke. All my uncles were married and had several children, except Chaim, who got married when the war started.

When I spent my vacation days in Seredne, I used to prefer living with Regina neni. If I missed my mother I would listen to Regina neni's soft voice, and eventually fall asleep. She sounded so much like my mother, that when my eyes were shut I couldn't tell them apart.

My Zaidi and Babi (Grandfather and grandmother) owned a large building in the village, and hugge vineyards on the top of the mountains. The building was divided into several sections, providing a home and business for each of their

sons. Behind each store were the living quarters, - but Zaidi's home and store stand out in my mind utmost. The "General Store" my Zaidi owned was the most diversified, because of all the many things it offered. The wonderful aroma of rich spices, roasted peanuts and fresh nuts, oranges, candy and chocolates was most tempting. He also sold hardware and articles such as flour, sugar, salt, tea etc I was fascinated by these many varieties and became engrossed watching him sell his merchandise. Then he reached for a sheet of paper and rolled it into a bag to put the purchased goods into.

My Zaidi's house was full of knick- knacks, and the walls were adorned with portraits of the family. I was especially attracted to the one portraying a beautiful little girl, dressed in a fluffy pink party dress. I was told, that she was my cousin Muriel, who lived in America with her parents Jack and Fritzi. In my childish fantasy I visualized America as a far away make believe land, one that I certainly would never see. "I would not meet any of my American relatives ever" - I thought as I stared at the mysterious picture.

Every autumn our family gathered in Seredne for the annual grape harvest. We used to look forward with great anticipation to this special event. When it was time to go, we left early in the morning. The horses were attached to the wagon and off we went to the mountains. Upon our arrival we saw young peasant girls involved in their work. They were picking grapes from the grape vines, putting them into huge baskets which were carried by strong men into the cabin, for the making of the wine. The cheerful songs of the harvesters echoed through the entire hillside. The birds joined in with their jolly chirping calls, even the bees seemed to rejoice in nature's splendid glory. On the top of the mountain preserves were boiling on open fire pits. The sweet odor was most tempting as it spread through the fresh air.

Everything seemed tranquil and peaceful those days. People were content and happy, - and so was I. Was it because it was summer and the sky was blue and the sun so very - very bright? Was it perhaps because people were in love, and love is the most important ingredient of happiness? Or was it because I was young and carefree concentrating on the splendor of nature and love that would

last forever? I didn't perceive then yet, that humanity had another side too. A grave and miserable one, that of the destruction of his fellowmen.

After the harvest we returned to Ungvar. We brought with us many cradles of grapes, chestnuts, jars of preserves and barrels of wine, that lasted through all the holidays. For the High Holidays my parents invited Zaidi and Babi to celebrate the occasion with us. They arrived in their horsedrawn buggy, bringing home baked pastry along with them. We were always happy to have them with us , and my mother truly outdid herself on these occasions.

My grandparents visited us quite often. Then many years later, one day the saddest news arrived, - our Zaidi died. My mother left at once to Seredne. She was dressed all in black for the funeral.When a week later she returned home, she looked painfully sad. I noticed that the collar of her coat was split , which was the symbol of mourning in the Jewish religion.

My Babi was never the same after Zaidi died. She was lonesome and moved in with one of her sons, and then moved on to another one. But they neglected her, and she didn't feel welcome anywhere. My mother brought her to Ungvar. She bathed her in our basin, she washed her hair and trimmed her nails and tried to keep Babi comfortable in our home. But Babi longed for her youngest son Chaim and decided to return to Seredne. She lived there for a few more years until she became ill and shortly thereafter died. When I recall my grandparents, I remember Zaidi Hershel Diamantstein as being a jolly and very handsome man. He used to wear a hat that was always tilted to one side in a very charming way. Babi Sheindel was a tall, quiet, delicate lady.

There was a time in our lives when my father didn't earn a good living. Those years were hard on us, yet no one on the outside would have ever guessed it. My father had tremendous pride and would never expose our family's hardships to the outside world. He was extremely strickt and demanding with us, even when it concerne my mother. If we disappointed or displeased him, he would get annoyed and not talk with us. He rarely hit us children, but when he did rely on spanking he would become enraged by it.

My father kept in close contact with his family in Poland. He would write and send them parcels often.

I was about ten years old when our entire family took a trip to visit his place of birth. The preparations for this trip were endless. We all got new dresses, shoes, pyjamas etc. etc. My father took my mother to the best tailor in town to get her a new suit. She looked beautiful in her light grey suit, royal blue blouse, new hat and all the complimentary accessories. He wanted us to look most proper for this special occassion. I will never forget the contentment in his eyes when he looked at us as we were leaving.

We traveled by train. This was a pleasant and new experience for us children. It was also to be the first time my mother would meet her in - laws and other relatives. After an entire day of travel we arrived late at night to the tiny village named Vysocko Nizna. Upon our arrival we were welcomed with much affection by our new relatives. Unlike my Zaidi of Seredne, this grandfather looked more serious and older. Because of his long white beard he reminded me of a biblical holy man from the ancient times. My grandmother was a tiny frail woman with a cheerful smile, that seemed to remain on her face. They shared their small house with a son and his family. It was obvious that they were poor. They were happy to have us with them, and were catering to our needs in every possible way. It was difficult for us children to communicate with our grandparents, since we couldn't speak Yidish (Jewish). But we managed to manifest our feelings of love by exchanging smiles, huggs and many kisses.

My mother didn't enjoy her visit in Poland. Her asthma condition flared up during this vacation. My grandmother tried to comfort her by offering fresh milk from a cow she had just milked, but that didn't seem to help. After a two week stay we returned to Ungvar.

Parting with them was sad and tearful. Zaidi hugged and kissed each one of us, almost as if he was blessing us. He embraced my father lovingly for a long long while. My last view of Babi was at the station. She was smiling at us tenderly, waving her old wrinkled hand until she became so small, we could not make her out.

I feel very fortunate today. Last night I had a dream about my mother.

She wore a simple white dress and her hair was done at Mr. Tussay's salon. She was leading me somewhere, holding my hands gently. When I woke up I could still feel the warmth of her touch. I feel enormous gratitude for the wonderful experience of being with her in my dream.

Today the weather is gloomy, it started to rain.At home we always stayed indoors on such rainy days.My mother kept the kitchen nice and warm. She baked "fank" (doughnuts) filled richly with jam and sprinkled generously with powdered sugar. There was always plenty of it, satisfying everyone. Plenty for the family, for the neighbors who often dropped in and also for those unfortunate, homeless beggars. I remember one such rainy day when an unfamiliar man stood timidly in our doorway. He was a Polish immigrant and didn't know anyone in the city. My mother invited him to eat with the rest of us. He entertained us with various stories about life in Poland.He often came back to eat a good meal. He knew that he could depend on my mother, who often helped the homeless needy people.

Every Friday evening crazy, abandoned Bumi appeared in our doorway to gulp down his Shabesz meal.The mental hospital wouldn't keep him, even though he was mentally unbalanced. Old N.neni arrived on Thursdays, taking sugar,spices,and homemade sauerkraut along with her. She never stopped complaining about her selfish rich relatives who were insensitive to her needs. My mother paid weekly visits to the sick people. Every week she went to the hospital to visit D.neni, Petyu and terminally ill Malke neni. My mother helped poverty stricken Perl neni, and gave comfort and financial support to Bozi neni, who was abandoned by her corrupt husband.

But more then anyone I like to recall Avrum bacsi. His deep blue eyes sparkled with love and adoration when he talked to Peszel Ziesze.He came to our house quite often with his wife Malke neni, and after she died he continued to visit us with his second wife too.

Avrum bacsi got injured while he worked repairing a roof. He was confined to bed for a long period of time. It became my chore to deliver Chales and other food to Avrum bacsi's tiny house every week on Fridays. This was sent to him by my mother, so that his family could enjoy a proper Shabesz meal.

When he recovered, he came to see us. He never stopped appreciating my mother's care and concern during his period of ill health.

Avrum Bacsi owned a small house which was surrounded by a little garden. In it he planted various vegetables and fruits. Despite the fact that he was rather poor, Avrum Bacsi was always happy. His wide open smile never left his face while he was cheerfully puffing on his ever present pipe.

I can't understand what was the origin that kept people like Avrum Bacsi happy and content. Whatever it was, this element is lacking in us. Maybe the war destroyed it just as it destroyed our past and it's memories in many of us.

It is most unfortunate that we tend to forget. Some people are puzzled with me for writing my memoirs. They believe that the past which was so horrible should not be talked about. I disagree with those who hold this belief. I feel that the reason that so many of our children are unable to visualize our parents, our homes, our past, and can't identify with our roots is because they haven't heard us talk about our past, our heritage, our horrors. This is unfair to our children as well as to our dear family and friends who died in vain. I have many memories mustered in my mind and soul and I have a need to share them with you. Once, a long time ago, I read that people die more than once. First when the actual physical act of death occurs and the second time when an end is caused by forgetting them.

If we all could believe in this, we could go on cherishing and keeping alive the memories of our loved ones. We should also talk about the dreadful horrors we experienced during the Nazi regime, and perhaps by doing so we can hope that such atrosoties never occur again.

Now I shall acquaint you with my childhood and the time period between 1939 - 1945.

As a small child I didn't understand the difference between being Jewish or being Gentile, however, as I grew up I soon began to see the contrast. As Jews we observed the Sabat, we celebrated different holidays, we were forbidden to eat ham or other "treife" food, and our doorways were adorned with Mezuzas in our entire house. Basically our everyday life style was more restricted. My parents kept an orthodox kosher home.

We had separate dishes for "Milchik" (dairy), "Fleishig" (meaty) and "Pareve" foods. For Passover we yet had another set of dishes. We were children of "Orthodox Jewish" people, and we socialized only with Jewish friends. That's how it was, Jews with Jews, - - Gentiles with Gentiles.

I can still remember my first humiliating experience of being Jewish. It was at school, professor H. was arranging the sitting order of his class. As my name was called I obediently took the seat pointed to me. The person to sit next to me was a Gentile girl. However she refused to take the place , objecting to sit next to a Jew. I can still hear the echo of her indignant shouting: "I will not sit next to a "Zidovka" (Jewess). Without any word from the professor condemning her behavior, she was placed next to a Gentile girl. The professor continued with his schedule, not giving this case any concern at all. I will never forget how humiliated I was. I could feel the blood rushing to my head. I was confused and embarrassed in front of my classmates. I sadly learned that it was not me she rejected, but the JEW in me. This was only the first such comment I was to hear for many years to come. It was then, that I learned the inequalities between being a Jew, and a non Jew.

One would think that in a democratic country such as Chechoslowakia, with a liberal and humanitarian president as Tomas Garygue Masaryk there would be no such thing as antisemitism. The sad fact is, that it prevailed there as well. We Jews had to learn to live with it, because we had no choice. We knew that we were only tolerated, never fully accepted. Our parents avoided the "problem causing" GOYIM (Gentiles), and taught us to do the same. This was how we managed to live in peace, minding our own business.

When in 1939 the war broke out everything changed for the worst. Podkarpatska Russ and Uzshorod were occupied by Hungary. The liberating army of Admiral Horthy Miklos was marching on the streets of Ungvar, singing heroic songs. Among the anxious crowd of people lining the streets were also many Jews. They stood on the sidewalks welcoming their Hungarian brothers, showering them with cigarettes, flowers and cheers, never suspecting that in time these Hungarian brothers would prove to be their enemies.

It didn't take long as we witnessed their first antisemitic outbreaks. They ridiculed and provoked us Jews in every way possible. They harrassed the young "Chasidic" boys (bochers), pulling their "payesz" (sidelocks), making fun of their Jewish names. The Orthodox Jews were attacked by drunk soldiers. They were mocking and mimicking these innocent pious men. It was then that my parents started to call Majsu - Mickey, and Chajku - Agi, as these Hungarian names would lessen their association with Judaism.

In order to continue our education we were to attend Hungarian schools. Most of these schools openly manifested antisemitizm. At this time many Jewish student terminated their education, rather than to cope with the harrasment of Jew hating teachers. To further my education I enrolled in the Hungarian Gymnasium. Being a student of that school remains a pleasant memory to me. I was a carefree teenager acquiring new friends in a new school.The all girl school provided us with an excellent academic program. Our principal, Dr. Gedeon was a kind, liberal man. We all wore school uniforms. Perhaps the fact that we dressed alike kept us united as one. At the end of my third year however many changes occured. All the Jewish students were summoned into the principal's office. We received our final report-cards, then were told that we no longer could continue our education there. We were disqualified, because we were undesired Jews. I could tell that Dr. Gedeon's sympathy ran with us, as he shook hands with each one of us wishing us his best.

There was a Hebrew Gymnasium in our city. Many Jewish students were enrolled there, and those of us who were expelled from other schools joined them in order to continue our education. This was a private school, supported by Jewish community members. Tuition was high, and it was divided accordingly by one's financial status. Those who couldn't afford tuition, but excelled scholastically were permitted to attend via scholarship endowment.

The Hebrew gymnasium was a complete change to me. Whereas the Hungarian gymnasium was an all girl school, this was co - ed. There were so many handsome young men, and they were all Jewish. I felt very comfortable among my own people With the help of an instructor I quickly learned the Hebrew language. I believe, that in this school I acquired the awareness of becoming a proud, selfrespected Jew. I had great ambition and drive. I studied diligently and as a result did well in all my classes.

During the Hungarian regime it was customary for students to wear uniform hats. The style of the hat represented the school one attended. Our hats of the Hebrew gymnasium were made of navy blue velvet. It was adorned with our school emblem of blue and white color. The grade of the student appeared on the rim of the hat.

I was pleased when my first gold colored arrow was pinned to the rim of my hat. This ment that I started the fifth grade in the gymnasium, a step I saw toward maturita (graduation). A year later when I received the second gold arrow, my mother bought me a new hat.I was so proud wearing it, as proud as a queen wearing her jeweled crown. Hard work at school paid off well. At the end of my sixth year, my name appeared among the outstanding students. It was printed in large bold letters in the yearbook. Everything was going on well, and I was happy and carefree. Everything went well, except the timing!

Mickey was one of those students who dropped out from school, seeking a trade in radio mechanicks. He was bright and learned quickly. It wasn't long before he built his own radio unit. Mickey was one of the handsomest young men in our city. He was tall, dark, good looking, - my mother's pride and joy. Many of my girlfriends were infatuated with him, and I was happy to show him off. Mickey dated many girls, but gave them all up for E. Agi. She was tall, blonde, attractive and a very nice person. They made a beautiful pair, as they strolled hand in hand through the colorful garden of the Galago (park). Agi became Mickey's steady girlfriend, his first love.

Mickey was a Zionist and became involved with the movement to Palestine. At home he often talked about the worsening political situation, and it's consequences on us Jews. He was most apprehensive regarding this matter, and often discussed the possible chances of fleeing to Palestine.

My father envisioned a different route toward escape, the one taking us t America. He wrote a letter to uncle Jack in New- York, urging him to save us. He described the grim situation of Europeian Jews which affected our family too. He pleaded for a swift affidavit, so that we could immigrate to America while there was still a chance.

I dont know if there was any answer to my father's plea. I only know, that a affi davit could ha saved the lives of five people.

Hitler occupied Austria and Csechoslowakia. In the year of 1939 he invaded Poland. The large number of Jewish population was petrofied by Hitler's forces. With shock we listened to the grim news about the horrors inflicted on Polish Jews. We heard of the bloody pogroms taking place in small villages where Jews li ved. We heard of the brutal attacks on men, women and small, innocent children. Entire families were tortured and shot to death. We heard that they raped the young Jewish women, harrasing and abusing them until their death. Many Polish antisemites joined with the Germans in carrying out the mission of annihilating the Jews.

In our city all Jews were ordered to identify with Hungarian citizenship papers. Those families who couldn't present this important document were considered immigrants, and faced the risk of being extradited from this country. No one anticipated where these people would be taken. According to rumors, they woul be sent to Madagaskar. No one knew of the dreadful actions that would become the fate of these unfortunate people.

Since my father was Polish, our family was endangered too. Instantly he seeked out connections, whereby he ultimately was able to purchase a birth certificate listing Ungvar as his place of birth. Having this document enabled him to get the citizenship papers. This quick manuever on his part saved our family fro an earlier death.

In 1941 Jewish immigrants, particularly Polish ones were sought out by t police officials. Those without documents were extradited from Hungary. I personally witnessed the removal of the R.family, living in the basement of the building.

I often went down to this dark pit to watch R.Bacsi at work, repairing all sorts of shoes. His hands were heavily soiled and filled with marks of being overworked. He had a family of eight to support. They lived in a large room with a dirt floor instead of a regular floor. The place was minimally furnished with only the bare essentials; beds, a long table and chairs, an oven and R.Bacsi's working bench. The room had two narrow windows and in looking out one could only

see the shoes of passerbys. How ironic to think that R.Bacsi's life was filled with shoes in every aspect. That summer day in 1941 the police entered their dark basement and ordered them to leave their home. I recall as they one by one reached the backyard. In each one's hand was a small bundle of personal belongings. That was all they were permitted to take. As R.Bacsi walked past us , I could see fear and confusion in his eyes. He glanced at us, as if he knew that he was seing us fo the last time. He stopped for just a second, but the insensitive guard kept pushir the family ahead. I felt so sorry for them! Not only were they poor economically managing to survive from day to day, but now they were also faced with the greatest horrors one could imagine. With the passing of time we learned that these unfortunate people were taken to the Polish border, ordered to dig trenches that were unknowingly to become their graves.

Hitler's power and arm was rapidly spreading. All territories occupied by the German army became an instant mortal threat to the Jews. More gruesome news were heard daily. Frightful accounts on the situation of Polish Jews were told an retold. Their homes and businesses were confiscated and given to Gentiles. Polish Jews were placed into Ghettos, where their livelyhood was deficient and limited i every aspect.

One day my father heard that a Polish couple was hiding in our temple seeking temporary refuge there. Their escape from Poland was indeed a miracle! Wearing peasant clothing they fooled the guards and managed to cross the borders. My parents wasted no time in getting to the temple. With them they took enough food and clothing for the couple. When they later returned, I could hear them softly crying to one another. I knew then, that we were all in great danger.

It was now that the minister of foreign affairs Imredy Bela was more and more involved in solving of the Jewish questions. Licenses of Jewish businessmen were revoked and transferred to Gentile ownership. Jewish students were deprived from seeking higher education. There was public assault and mockery of Jews. Slogans, songs and riddles were made up about Jews and those involved with them. One such song was :"If your sweetheart is Jewish, you should tie a rope around your neck. . . (hang yourself).

Needless to say such mockery and insults invoked resentment among the Jews toward the Gentiles. But what power did our resentment have toward our stronger adversaries? We coped with these harrasments, all of us in our own way. Religious Jews turned to G-D for solace, while non secular people turned to one another for hope and comfort. It didn't seem to matter who one turned to for consolation, the situation seemed to be worsening by the day. We heard of concentration camps where Jew were being taken. We heard terrifying accounts about young Jewish women, who were sexually abused by German soldiers, then shot to death. These barbarous Nazis ofte shot them into the breast or genitals, manifesting their animal perversity.

We realized the seriously grim situation, yet we hoped that such terrible atrocities would not happen to us. We continued to depend on a miracle that would save us. We couldn't find security anywhere except in our homes. Every evening we turned on the radio, and listened to the shortwave station, the voice of the underground. The radio was our only source of connection with the world. Although tuning in on such stations was harshly punishable, my father never missed the evening news. He secured the house by locking the doors and windows. He turned on dim ly the lights, then we clustered together in order to hear any reassuring words. We listened breathlessly to every single word uttered. Sometimes the repports were encouraging. It gave us hope, that the war would end before Hitler could destroy us too. With the coming of every dawn there were more and more problems Jews had to face. Gentiles avoided any contact with us, if not because of their hatred, the because they feared being labeled Jew Lovers.

In the spring of 1944, in March the Nazis arrived to Hungary to carry out the final solution of Hungarian Jews. We saw the arrival of the hateful Germar S.S. troops to our city. In April of that year all Jews were ordered to wear the yellow Star of DAvid on the left side of the clothing. I was so young and a very proud Jew. I didn't want my humiliation to show, so I delibarately held my head high, as I wore the yellow star on my coat, over my heart. In the evening there was a curfew imposed on us. After sundown no Jew was allowed to leave his home. It seemed that more laws, commands and regulations were constituted daily. we were surely loosing all our rights not only as citizens, but also as human beings.

I remember one day as I was on my way home an S.S. soldier followed me. Waving his gun at my back he was shouting;"Jude (Jew), soon you will be dead!" It was after this alarming incidence that I remained indoors more and more.

The last Passover our family spent together was in April of 1944. Despite the gruesome situation we were getting ready to observe the holiday. Zsuzsi neni, the Gentile cleaning woman wouldn't come anymore to do her weekly chores, so I decided to take her place. For the first and last time in my life I did my share of housework. Bending to my knees I scrubbed the hardwood floors through the whole house. I helped all I could as if I knew that this was my last chance.

On Passover eve our table was set in the traditional holiday fashion. My poor mother somehow put our dinner together. As we took our places around the table, our thoughts were filled with enormous fear. The soft glow of the white candles gently spread over the embroidered Matzo cover. My father sitting at the head of the table started to perform the Seder services. He lifted the wine goblet and said the Kidush and blessed the wine. He recited the "Bracha" (blessing over the Matzo. He closed his eyes and raised his voice as if he was attempting to reach the Allmighty G-D for a miracle. G-D however didn't offer any miracles! My father's sacred prayers were answered by disturbing shouts of Nazis. They knocked on our windows, alarming us with vulgar words and curses. My father's voice turned faint and fainter as he whispered his prayers. We sobbed quietly for fear as not to antagonize the Germans . Finally my father concluded his prayers and my mother put out the candlelights. This was our saddest holiday, and the beginning of HELL.

After Passover all Jews from the nearby villages were taken to the Ghetto in Ungvar. Trucks filled with Jewish families were arriving daily. We watched them through the windows knowing that within a matter of days it would be our turn.

Mickey and his friend were planning to hide in a wine cellar. Despite my mother's desparate pleadings he insisted that he would rather go into hiding, than face having to go into the Ghetto. We packed enough food and clothing for him, then set out to see the wine cellar. We had a long walk from our home,

since the wine cellar was located in the other part of the city. When we finally arrived, we approached the closed doors carefully, making certain that no one cou see us. We entered the cellar and found ourselves surrounded by dampness and overwhelming darkness. As we lit a candle we saw countless barrels of wine everywhere The place smelled of an unpleasant odor that nausiated me, yet I envied their brave attempt, and I imagined myself as one of them, escaping from the Nazis too. Before we parted, we established a secret word among us. The word we chose was "Cukor" (sugar). In a special emergency to make contact with Mickey, we were to use this word. Tearfully we said good- bye, hoping that they made the right choice.

By the time we got home my mother already missed Mickey. She wouldn't eat or sleep, she cried non - stop.At first my father tried to comfort her, but late his frustration turned to anger and he would shout at her. Finally for my mother's sake we decided to get in touch with Mickey. I will never forget how hurriedly she got dressed. Her sad eyes expressed enormous suffering, but in her heart she was determined to bring her son back home.

When we arrived at the cellar she rushed to the entrance, and called on her son with the secret word "Cukor". At first there was no response, but after repeated attempts we contacted Mickey. He was pale and nervous, but reassured us, that everything was just fine in the cellar. He was convinced that he made the right choice by hiding out. My mother's trip was to no avail, as she was unable to convince Mickey to return with her.

This event was our last expression of personal freedom before we too like so many other Jews before us were now forced to leave our homes, our memories, our lives behind. It all happened so quickly! The Germans knew how to manipulate us! We were told of how much of our belongings could each person take along. My father handed me a rucksack filled with a variety of imported cheeses chocolates and other kind of delicacies. Up till now he had kept these tempting items closed up in a closet. We were not to touch it, because those wonderful

delights were saved for needy times, for special emergencies. I carried the ruck sack to the Ghetto that lasted six weeks, and into our horrible venture to Aushwitz. Once there, our bundles were taken away from us. I never had the opportunity of eating any of the tempting delikacies that my father had saved for special times.

I often wonder how my parents were emotionally affected by having to part with their home, their friends, their lifelong belongings, - - everything that was them?

As children we followed our parents in their steps, we did as they did. We followed them through endless miseries, marching side by side into "Dante's Hell."

Not all Jews went into the Ghetto. There were those, who committed suicide rather then to submit themselves to the terrorizing Germans. These proud people chose to die with dignity rather then to subject themselves to torture and humiliation.

THE GHETTO.

A Ghetto is a quarter where an entire population of people of a particular ethanic background are being kept with restrictions placed on them.

In 1944 in the end of April the entire Jewish population of Ungvar and neighboring villages were taken to the brick factory, that served as our Ghetto.It was a usual summer day with all it's glory and sunshine, when the Hungarian gandarmen knocked on our doors, ordering us to leave our home at once. On the street we joined the large group of other Jewish families. We were a combination of people of all ages, - infants, youngsters, parents and the elderly grandparents. Like some herd of wild animals we were patrolled by armed police. We marched through familiar streets until we arrived at the destination place, the Ghetto.

We were greeted by vicious Hungarian soldiers, who were eager to victimize our people. Suddenly I saw my father being pushed, then being repeatedly knocked over his head, We stared helplessly while the young bastard kicked my father in his groin. My father unable to control his pain let out a quiet shriek. Then the soldier finally let go off him. Not one of us so much as uttered a sound. We kept moving ahead, only our hearts were filled with our unspoken words of hatred.

The Ghetto was guarded by armed police 24 hours a day. We were not permitted to have any connections with anyone on the outside. We were an isolated group of people whose only contact were those people within the Ghetto. During the day we would congregate outdoors talking to one another. At night we slept in barracks or tents. It was a good thing that they allowed us to bring blankets, otherwise we wouldn't have anything to cover our bodies with. The loudspeakers were constantly blasting orders, only to change them at the last minute. There was constant terror. We lived in fear and panik and the horrible fright of the inevitable death. Food was supplied through the Jewish Kitchen. It was distributed once a day. Some people cooked simple meals on the open fire, while there were always those unfortunate ones, who went without food. There were no adequate hygienic accomadations made in the Ghetto. The one time brick factory was without bathrooms, or wash basins. Large latrinas were built for the "waste relief" purposes, however we had no means of privacy. We ate collectively, we washed ourselves in groups, and now

we sat on the latrinas without any privacy too.

For six weeks we lived this miserable lifestyle in the Ghetto. Fifty, or more men were escorted by guards daily to various stations of work in the city. It was through one of these men that we got information about Mickey. He told us, that Mickey was seen on the street, and was looking for a way to reach us. My father immediately rushed to the Jewish commander of the Ghetto, asking for help. Mr. H. arranged it so, that the following day when the men returned from the city Mickey would be among them. We waited for him to arrive, watching breathlessly as he came in, - one more within a group of Jewish men.

Mickey looked pale and restless. He told us that he and his friend developed breathing difficulties, due to lack of oxygen in the winecellar. Realizing that they could not survive with the existing problems, they were forced to leave their place of hiding. He seemed very disappointed, but my mother was glad to have her son back.

In the beginning of May 1944 the names of the first group to be transported were anounced on the loudspeaker. Immediate panik set in. Cries and desparate questions of why they had to go first were asked. Why should they be separated from friends and relatives? Others complied with the orders of the loudspeaker, going willingly with a hope that nothing worse could await them. We were reassured that no harm would come to us, Hungarian Jews. We were told, that we would be transported to farms, where we would work collectively. We were pacified with promisses, that immediate families would remain together. Some people relied on such promisses, and believed in the "farm work" stories. Those who knew the truth kept it in secret, rather then to create more panik yet. More transports were leaving every day.There was sadness, and tears and the constant terror of facing another "tomorrow". We all grew restless and worrisome. Some people couldn't cope with such stress, and consequently lost their sanity. One such person, I remember well, - was a beautiful young girl from Seredne.

One afternoon armed with a kitchen knife she attacked the watch guard. She demanded to take his place of duty, to become the guard over him.When he didn't comply she tried to assault him with her knife. Two guards restrained her from behind, and tied up the violent girl. Next day she was sent away with a transport.

If confussion and fear, panic and distortion can lead to madness, I believe we all were to a degree insane by now.

Our family was in the last transport to leave the Ghetto, On Saturday morning we were loaded into trucks to be driven to the railroad station.There we were searched by the Hungarian police guards, who were looking for any valuables they could find on our bodies. They didn't miss taking any item, regardless of how small in value it was. They even took my mother's simple wedding band.

When the search ended we were ordered to march toward the freight wagons. About 50 - 100 people were jammed into each wagon. We were counted one by one like animal heads. When the last person was finally counted, I remember the police pushing him in. The doors of the wagon were shut with a forceful noise behind him.

There was darkness inside and darkness in our hearts. Small children started to cry from hunger and discomfort. We were crowded in , no one had any room to move about . There were no decent arrangements made for people to relieve their wastes. In one corner of the wagon stood a large pail where we were to relieve ourselves. Needless to say, in no time the odor in the wagon became unbearable. The stench of urine was all through the wagon. The weary journey was a long one, especially because the train stopped only once a day. When it stopped one man was selected from each wagon to go fetch water for the rest of us. In our wagon Mickey was selected for this task.

As the door opened I could hear voices around us being spoken in German. The Hungarian guards were replaced by Germah ones. They were inhumanly cruel, intimidating us with endless shouting. " Jude, du ferfluchte Jude" (damned Jew) they yelled at us. It was here that I first heard the German expression "LOSS" (move, hurry). This word was frequently used in concentration camps to rush and harrase us.

"LOSS, LOSS" - - charged the Nazis violently.
"LOSS" -- they ordered us to line up for the morning Apel (rollcount),
"LOSS"- - - they marched us to the work place,
"LOSS" - - they ordered us to line up for selections, and
"LOSS" - - to the gaschambers.
Anywhere they ordered us, they always proceeded their command with this word. How I dispise this expression and the sound of it, which had instilled in me an unequaled hatred for the German language.

In no time Mickey was back, carrying with him the pail of water. During the few minutes while the door was open, I could see nature in all it's glory. The trees were in their magnificent bloom, the fields were covered with an array of colorful spring flowers. Even the birds seemed happy, as they were chirping merry tunes high upon the blue sky. Everything was very much alive, except for us who were heading towards our deaths.

As the doors closed once again, we began to anticipate more dreadful events that would await us. Now we realized that the Hungarian "farm work" talks were only tales to pacify us. We knew, that the Germans were in total command over us. In our desparate condition we hardly exchanged words with each other during this endless journey. At one point I became so terrified, that my entire body started to shake out of control. It appeared that my nerves were weakening and giving way. I turned to my father for comfort. I asked him what was going to happen to us? I needed to hear his reassurance. Without any words he reached out to hold my trembling hands. I could see the unspoken pain in his eyes, as he sat near me embracing me tightly. I realized then, that he felt as I did, - - - frightened, helpless and alone.

We traveled under such nerve wrecking conditions for two days and three nights. It seemed like eternity. Our emotions and fears ran high. It was difficult to fall asleep, but I managed to nap now and then. When I would awaken, I wished that I could have gone on sleeping- - - maybe forever. It wasn't that I wanted to die, but I began fear and question that my life would soon end anyhow. I was so naive and young ! I felt that I had so much living yet to do ! During one sleepless night I overheard a man and woman making love. I heard their

sighs and moans and I wondered if I would ever live to experience the pleasures of lovemaking? I contemplated of how unfair it is for the young to die. The older ones have lived and loved, I needed a chance to some happiness too! My feelings and thoughts were so confused. I felt selfish and embarrassed for my mixed emotions, yet I had such self pity! I even regretted being a virgin.

The train came to a full stop. Two S.S.men opened the door of our wagon, and demanded from us all our valuables. Pushing us with their guns, they urged us to comply. We had been searched so many times before, we had nothing left but our misery. One of the S.S.Men swiftly grabbed my mother's leather coat and left. However the other one had a most peculiar request. He wanted an umbrella, an object that we didn't have .He urged us to hurry, shouting and hitting all those within his reach. Finally, pointing his gun at a child he warned us: "I'll kill all the children and women when I return for the umbrella".

As the doors closed behind him and the freight train started up again, we all experienced an after shock to this dreadful event. The men remained silent and motionless, while the women wept quietly holding their children close to their hearts. They stopped seeking reassurance from their husbands, just as we had stopped asking for it from our parents. We were all facing the same HELL, and we were all aware that the entire world had turned it's back on us Jews. We continued our journey, and the insane S.S.man didn't show up. There is nothing worse and more nerve wrecking than the fear of uncertainity. Those days in the dark freight cars, not knowing where we were going- - were frightful days.

As I think back, I am angry at the world for the shame it exhibited in it's lack of humanitarism. It is painful to admit, that no one cared to intervene on the behalf of the Jews.

A few days ago I had a nightmare, as I often do. I was in the camp with my child, who was selected to die in the crematorium. In my dream I was a parent. As a mother, I experienced the emotional pain of having to give up a child forever. I ran to my child, and I told her for the last time, "I love you".

I awaked from this nightmare trembling and weakened. I looked at the clock, it was 1:30 A.M. Despite the lateness of the hour, I was fully awake now. The fear in me persisted. I needed to convince myself that I was safe. I turned on the lights and took a valium. I woke up Miksa and told him of my awful dream. I drew close to him to get strength from his warm body. When I finally calmed down, I turned the lights off and returned to sleep. In the dark I let my tears flow on the pillow. I wept quietly, thinking of all those mothers and children who in the camps were seperated. Did they bid to each other a last farewell?

On the third day around noon we arrived at our destination. The train came to a halt. The heavy doors were unlocked and we found ourselves surrounded by SS men and other camp commanders. They told us to quickly get out of the freight wagon and leave our baggages behind. They ordered "LOSS" the males and females in seperate groups. In the tumult of shouts and cries we obeyed frantically. Some exchanged a last gaze with one another. Others just continued walking anywhere they were ordered to go. I too parted forever with my father, here at the entrance gate of Aushwitz.

The huge entrance gates carried a large sign "ARBEIT MACHT FREI" (Work makes you free).

Through these doors we were rushed to the main section of Aushwitz. Here the gruesome ordeal of selection took place. Everything was happening so fast, the Nazis were a very well organized bunch of murderers. They didn't waste time as they started seperating us in columns of left and right - pointing link or recht.

The Capos (prisoners with privilages, who were in charge of supervising a certain number of other prisoners) were also helping in this procedure. In some cases they grabbed an infant or a small child from it's mother and gave it to an older person . He then ordered the mother toward the right side, while the children and older people were sent to the left.

My mother, who was 44 years old, my 12 year old little sister, and I were sent to the right side of the line. We kept moving ahead to the group on the right side not knowing whether we were granted life

or if we were to be deprived of it now.

In no time we heard of the fate of all those people who were sent to the left side. They were doomed to die, by the judgement of the SS. The reason for this action was that all those who couldn't perform in jobs were not needed. They were disqualified from living. All the elderly, all the crippled, all the sick, all the pregnant women, and all the young, innocent children whose lives had not even begun were condemmned to die. All because they were Jews and not of use to the Nazis. And how were these people to die? We listened in a frenzy to the shocking, terrifying methods.

We were told that people were gassed and cremated in huge ovens. That the cloud of smoke and the nauseating odor of burning meat is the flesh and body of our Jewish sisters and brothers, and our beloved ones.

In panic I began fantasizing of ways of tortures that these unfortunate people encountered. I began to think of what it must be like to be gassed? Did they die instantly or did they suffer before thier death? Is the crematorium a place with enormous ovens and scattered burning flames to engulf human bodies? Did these condemmed people shout from agony and could anyone hear them? Does all this mean that we too will end our lives in such ovens? I visualized of how horrible it must be to burn to death, to ashes, and I wondered where was G-d? Where was His justice, was this His judgment too? Why do we have to endure so much cruelty? More and more questions were attacking my mind, but my thoughts came to an abrupt end by the shouting voice of a Capo.

"ACHTUNG" - shouted the large healthy young woman - a Capo.

She ordered us into lines, then led us through the huge camp of Aushwitz. Everywhere we looked we saw barracks identified with a specific number. Now and then we could see bald strange looking people staring at us. Some were motioning signals towards us. We thought that these were insane people, commited to this asylum. Why else would all of them be bald, wearing identical clothing? We ignored them as we continued to march. Finally we arrived at a barrack, where we joined with another group of Jewish women.

We were now under the supervision of another Kapo, a Slovak

Jewish girl. This is how I remember her adress to us.

"Welcome animals! Aushwitz is an extermination camp where all of us will die. While you lived in your safe homes and ate well, I was already here suffering from cold, hunger and constant terror. My mother was here with me too. You didn't do anything about it, and now you are here too. Do you see the smoke merging from those chimneys? Can you smell the odor of burning flesh? It is the flesh of Jewish people.My mother was sent into the ovens too, and soon it will be your turn. Remember,we all will end up in smoke."

There was anger and hostility in her words and attitude. She seemed to have lost all human feelings because of all the heartache she had endured through the years.

We were told to undress and leave all our clothes behind. We lined up in nude in front of the prizoner "barbers". They cut then shaved our hair from our heads, our underarms and our pubic area. After a quick shower they disinfected us with an ice cold solution. The huge pile of human hair was saved for special utilization in the German industry.

Needless to say how demoralizing it felt to be all nude, and now we became bald too. They robbed us from all human dignity mentally, and now physically too. My bare scalp felt uncomfortable and strange to my touch. I ran to the window and could hardly recognize myself in the glass. I looked around and realized that my mother and little sister looked very different too. All we had left was one another and we clung to each other for moral and emotional support. The Kapo led us to another block, where we were given a thin, grey smock to cover our bodies with. Just one grey smock per person, - nothing else. As if to ridicule us even more the taller and heavier women were given the smaller dresses. As a final act to this stressful day we were left without any word or supervision in the block. We were hungry, and thirsty, but above all we were desperately apprehensive.

Some went outside to satisfy their curiousity, while others sat on the bare floor as if in a trance. Others were resolving their mournful experiences praying quietly for their families. We realized that we may never see our loved ones, our men, our friends, our families we were separated from. Unless the war ends, - unle we live to seeit. - - - -

But right now we had little hope and more fear. The atmosphere in the block was one of sadness and iminent death. Everywhere around me people cried with grie There were so many of us in this block, that our bodies touched. It was warm, and we were not given any food or water all day. We grew tense and restless, some fai ted from dehydration . My little sister also collapsed as a result of discomfort.

Finally in the late afternoon two women were selected to carry the heavy containers of soup, that was to feed us. My mother was one of the two women chose The German Aufseherin pointed to my mother with a smile, as she selected her for this task. Did she smile at my mother out of kindness, or was it because she recognized my mother's weakness to take on such physical stress?

As the women returned with the container of food a Stubendienst (block hel per) ordered us into lines, - five women per line. One bowl of soup was to be sha red among these five women. The Stubendienst, who was usually a harsh, uncaring person did her job "LOSS" quickly. Without any regard of us she laddled the soup into the bowl, sometimes missing it. Because of her speed, a portion of the soup spilled on the ground. No one could complain, for in return she would only get a forceful blow to her head. They didn't hesitate to use violence with us at any time they wished. After we were given our modest portion of soup, we sat down on the floor to eat. We passed the bowl around for everyone to get their share of the tasteless repulsive liquid.

Someone was spreading encouraging rumors. She heard that we would be tran ported into a working camp. If this was true, we had a chance to stay alive. Aushwitz is definitely an extermination camp. There is only terror, despair and death here. Aushwitz is a damned place for endless selections and brutality. The cursed crematoriums are in a constant process of work.

We knew now about the showers where men, women and children were forced under the pretense that they could wash up there. Instead of water they were gi- ven poisonous gas, and torched to death by it. I wondered about their final mo-

ments as death took over their lives. I wondered about the terrible suffering the endured, and the ordeal the dear innocent children experienced by suffocating to death.

After the gassing the bodies were cremated. However first they removed all the valuables these unfortunate corpses still owned. The gold teeth, gold crowns and gold bridges were torn out from the corpse's jaws. And what if one wasn't entirely dead? Did they toss the agonizing half-dead people into the ovens too? In mass production one doesn't count, - - it didn't matter.

We also found out that the wire fences around the camp were installed with electric current. A single touch to it would electrocute a human being. It served as a warning to those, who challenged the idea of escaping. To others it was a means of ending their hopeless lives. It was an easy way to commit suicide, fast and never failing.

I am a coward, I couldn't commit suicide.Yet, I think with deep admiration of those prisoners who found courage to encounter death by their own decission. They had pride and selfesteem. They wouldn't tolerate the humiliation of being treated like animals.

Our first long day in Aushwitz ended, and we started to retire on the bare floor for some rest. As exhausted as we were, we couldn't fall asleep.With wide open eyes we speculated in the dark. Some of the girls found a way to make turban to cover their bare heads with.

The Germans had a habit of executing their commands during the night. Ghastly things seem even more frightening in the dark. I wonder if it was not for this reason, that they chose to command us during the sleeping hours of the night

The following day, many hours after midnight we were awakened by loud shouts and shrieking whistles. Suddenly the lights were turned on and we were LOSS pushed out. The Kapos were brutal, lashing us left and right, ordering us "LOSS" to hurry, - like one would whip a horse to speed him up.We cooperated rushing out fearfully. We were apprehensive, that another selection was in order.

"Zu funf" echoed the commanding voice of the Kapo. We were to form lines, five people in each line. Two S.S. men arrived, and the Kapo shouted "Achtung"! The sky was dark, covered by heavy clouds and it started to drizzle.In the dark shadow of this night we each received our first ration of bread. It was a fifth of a loaf.

We could see the chimneys of the crematorium and the smoke it exhaled. The odor of burned flesh smelled nausiating and frightening. We held on to our portio of bread, hoping it was a good omen.

The S.S. man took charge of the procedure, calling the first two lines ahead. Frantically we realized, that we were subjected to another of their selections. Suddenly the quiet drizzle turned into a heavy rain. It started to lighten and the rain turned into a severe blitz storm. In no time we became wet to our bones.

After a while the S.S. hurried away, leaving us in the pouring rain. Nature came to our rescue. Who knows how this selection process would have ended otherwise?

Shortly a Wermacht officer (soldiers drafted for obligatory military services) arrived to take command over our group. Due to the heavy rain we were ordered to follow him as swiftly as we could. After a while we realized, that we were marched toward the huge entrance gates, leaving Aushwitz and it's cursed crematoriums behind.

As we reached the railroad, we were ordered into open wagons to take us to our new place of destination. Each wagon was guarded by an armed Wermacht man. Ours was a young one without a trace of arrogance or cruelty on his face. At one point we gathered enough courage to question him about the new camp we were heading to. But he turned away, ignoring us.

Gazing at each other most of us were strangers, yet we carried the same burden - that of being persecuted Jews. Some catnapped leaning on the next perso others exchanged their desparate feelings of sorrow and fear. Some cried, maybe because of the cold rain and the discomfort,- or perhaps it was their way to release anxiety without words.

The train accelerated and the hours of the night were moving ahead too. At dawn I saw the first signs of daybreak, as the sun induced her lovely bright rays through the clouds. It manifested tranquality and purity. With admiration I contemplated the wonders of Nature, yearning to be part of it. We began to nibble on our small portion of bread. Some ate it quickly, others divided it into tiny bits, so it should last longer. The Wermacht guard was glancing at us from time to time.

We traveled an entire day. It was late at night when the train stopped in Lituania, in a place named Crottingen. We marched to a warehouse, where we were greeted by a slender middle aged man, the watchman. With curiousity he kept staring at us. He questioned us about our whereabouts, our religion and the nature of our crime. He shook his head, as if he couldn't understand something. Then he asked again: "Why are you all bald, looking so incredibly disfigured? What crime did you commit, that you were punished this way?" And we replied, that we were Jewish women, that was our only crime. "So you are women, Jewish women" - he was repeating after us. From the tone of his voice we felt, that he was suppressing hate and anger toward the Germans. He reassured us that no one would harm us in Crottingen. We never saw this watchman again, but his promise was true. Crottingen was the only place where we were treated like human beings.

In the morning we were moved into a small camp, our new place of stay. We were given some additional items of clothing, such as jackets, slacks and shoes. After the dreadful experiences in Aushwitz, this camp seemed almost reasonable.

The camp was surrounded by wired fences, and there were armed guards patrolling us day and night.The barracks were marked by numbers. In the rear of the camp were the washrooms and latrinas.

But what a relief it was to find out, that unlike in Aushwitz these wired fences did not hold electric current to kill people!The guards were Wermacht soldiers, not murderers of the S.S. squad! The showers were installed with regular water, not poisonous gas! There were no selections, nor crematoriums with it's repulsive odor of death! there was no brutality, nor any sickly harrasment here.

The barrack we were transferred to was filled with triple cots, (pritches) build bunkbed style, one on top of another. The pritches consisted of a burlap sack, filled with straw(matress) and a grey blanket. As we took our places, Anyu Agi and I felt very fortunate to be together.

In this camp we were joined with another group of Jewish prisoners , of Latvian and German nationality.We were surprised to see men, women and also small children in that group. They were dressed in regular cloth and they still had their long hair. Obviously they didn't go through any selections yet!

We were given a bowl and a wooden spoon, then were called to line up for our first meal there.

Every morning we were awakened at a very early hour. We lined up for Apel (zu funf) and after the roll call we received our morning ration, consisting of bla coffee and a modest portion of bread. Shortly after Herr Zimmer (our Obershar-fuhrer) arrived to take command .

Herr Zimmer was a short, middle aged man with dark friendly eyes in his smal face.In his hand he carried a leather whip, swaying it up and down in a circula motion. "Zu funf" (five in a row) we followed him to the warehouse, our locatio of work, The place was furnished with long tables and benches. Along the walls were the sewing machines. Our job was to repair torn and damaged military uniforms. The complicated jobs were done by experienced seamstresses on the sewing machines. The rest of us did the mending manually. The long tables were loaded with wartorn military clothing, ready for repair. Herr Zimmer selected several "forladies", who's responsibility was to distribute the pieces of clothing to us. We worked diligently, and in return we were given permission to repair our stuff.Herr Zimmer walked up and down between the tables, supervising our work. Now and then he stopped for a comment.One day he started a conversation with Mrs. B. He was impressed by her flawless German, and consequently promoted her to a better position - - she became his secretary. He admired people with knowledge, and intelligence.

Herr Zimmer was strickt, yet reasonable. We were to obey and follow

his orders at all times. He was warning us that we were his responsibilty, and if one of us would try to escape, such a person would instantly be shot. He demanded a certain amount of work production, and we applied ourselves to meet his requested quota.

The food they gave us wasn't much, but we learned to cope with hunger. Our favorite topic of conversation was cooking. we exchanged recipes and pretended that we actually prepared some of these meals. We vowed that if we lived to get back home, we would never stop eating. This way we would never experience hunger again.

We stopped menstruating through the entire year while in the camps. It was due to some chemicals mixed in our food.

One day after work I took a walk around the camp. I laid down to relax in the grass behind a barrack. Focusing my eyes on the green color, I visualized vegetables. I thought about the lack of Nutrients in our food and in our bodies, and I wondered if grass could provide some of the missing vitamins? I rolled on my stomach and began to chew the grass, just as a cow would in the pasture.

During the few months of our stay in Crottingen we were often talking about freedom. We mustered some hope that we may live to see the end of this inhuman war. We didn't think about Aushwitz and it's horrors. Because we weren't abused we remained a sensible group of prisoners.

In August of 1944 many changes occured though. Our working conditions and our all around life style became more restricted. Soon we saw several SS officers arriving to our camp. We knew this was a bad omen.

The next day we were called to line up for a "Special Appel". Herr Zimmer accompanied by two SS officers did the usual inspection. "Zu funf" (five in a line) we marched to the warehouse for another day of work. The two SS men observed the operation for a while, then they left. We were extremely frightened by them, they represented disaster and tyranny to us. We soon found out that our fear was justified, - because in reality these SS men came to arrange our evacuation from Crottingen.

In no time we became panicky and restless. Nothing was the same,

even Herr Zimmer became strange and irritable. Two days later our fate was finally resolved, with us leaving Crottingen and it's calm surroundings behind.

Guarded by the hateful S.S. we marched to the railroad station. After our arrival we were immediately ordered to work. There were piles and piles of black coal, and we were to fill up the empty wagons with it. We picked up the shovels and started to work. It was the first time that we performed hard labor, and the shovels of coal were heavy to lift. If someone rested up for just a brief moment, the inhuman S.S. noticed it right away. Using their leather clubs they accelerated our speed. By the time we finished our task, our hands were full of painful blisters.

It was late at night when we were finally loaded into the wagons too, and the train started out. We all were tired and worn out. This particular night has a special place in my memory, and I will remember it as long as I live.

I can see myself sitting in the middle, between my mother and my little sister. I could hear the peaceful sound of deep sleep coming from both sides. Their heads rested on my shoulders, and I felt wonderful to support them. I kept sitting erect, not daring to make a move so as not to disturb them in their comfortable position. My back started to ache, but the sensation of that pain was gratifying. It was an experience of giving of myself in need.

Next day around noon we arrived to Stutthof, our new place of destiny. In no time we were attacked by Kapos, rushing us through the main gates toward the barracks. Soon we realized that this concentration camp was a replica of Aushwitz. On our way we saw male prisoners, residing in the far end of the camp. We saw the gruesome building, that was the crematorium. We witnessed the "Sonder Commando" (prisoners working in the crematorium) leading another group of victims for their last ride. Those emaciated looking creatures were crying out with fear, just as animals do when they sense disaster.

Irene, a Hungarian redhead was our new "Block Elteste" (Block supervisor). She was a rather tall woman, with hard masculine features. Her dark piercing eyes were rigid and controlling. Unlike the rest of us, the prisoners holding positions were privileged to wear regular civilian clothing. Irene was dressed in a blouse

slacks and black shiny boots. To keep us in control, she carried a whistle and a leather club along with her.

We followed her to the block that was filled with the usual "triple" bunk-beds. Our bedding consisted of one grey rough blanket. The washroom was located at the entrance of the block, however we were not allowed to use it at our convenience. Irene was in charge of admittance, commanding us with her leather club. She also used her strong hands to punish us.

Once during the early morning rush to the latrina, I became her victim. She knocked me over my head so hard, that I felt the pain long afterwards. But more than anything I felt the emotional pain of being battered by a Jew.

Irene woke us up every morning at an extremely early hour. She was shoving and pushing us, shouting "LOSS, alles heraus" (move, all of you out) and all the while blowing her obnoxious, screeching whistle. When all of us got out, we line up "Zu funf" for the Apel. It always took a long time for the Kapo to arrive and count us, - as if she intended to punish us even more. Often the moon was still in the sky, and we witnessed the first signs of daybreak. In the cool dawn we huddled together for body warmth, and we swayed back and forth to keep alert. After Apel we lined up for the coffee ration. One bowl of lukewarm faintly sweetened black liquid was our breakfast. During the day we didn't get any ration at all. In the evening we each got a bowl of soup and a portion of bread. This small chunk of bread was our most important supliment, and we all savored it our own special way. Some people gulped it down instantly, others ate it slowly breaking it into tiny - tiny crumbs, while there were those who saved it for the following morning.

During the day we sat around idly, contemplating about our fate. We saw transports arriving, transports leaving. We saw selections and heard the cries that followed such events. We were glad that we weren't bothered with any selections yet. We heard rumors, that within a few days we would start to work again. Our job would be repairing military clothing, just like in Crottingen, under the supervision of Herr Zimmer.

I can not describe the wonderful feeling of relief we had, as we were leaving on our first day of work.

After the routine Apel and coffee ration we lined up "Zu funf". Guarded by the S.S. we proceeded toward the gates, where Herr Zimmer took command over our group. Under his supervision we marched toward the warehouse that was located onl a short distance away. The walk leading us there was a pleasant experience. On ou way we faced fewer barracks and enjoyed a panorama of nature's beauty. At one point we came across several small houses, surrounded by grass and colorful flowers. This view didn't really fit into the surroundings of a labor camp, yet it was part of Stutthof too. The people living there were women, Gentile prisoners with special privileges. Even from a distance we could tell, that these were well groomed, beautiful women. They had their long hair, and they wore regular clothin It was evident, that these women didn't encounter the sufferings inflicted on us Jewish prisoners. Every day as we marched by they were standing in their doorways, smiling at us.Some waved their hands in a friendly supportive gesture, and we the bald undernourished Jewish women stared with curiousity and envy at these privileged prisoners.

After a while we arrived to the warehouse. The barrack was furnished with long tables, benches and sewing machines, just like in Crottingen. Piles of war damaged uniforms was waiting for repair. The working conditions in Stutthof were more rigid, then in Crottingen. We weren't permitted to do any kind of sewing for ourselves. We were seriously warned not to take any item from the warehouse. Herr Zimmer was strickt, supervising us all the time. Those, who feared punishment complied with his rules and orders, while there were always others who were daring. They took their chances of stealing a piece of rag to keep themselves warm with. One day Herr Zimmer noticed such a woman sneaking a small rag under her grey dress. Infuriated by her actions he shouted at her, then slapped her face real hard. Herr Zimmer rarely punished us, but after this incidence he started to use his leather club too.

We worked six days a week, from early morning until late in the day.

On Sundays we remained in the block, passing time by reminiscing about the past, and worrying about the future.

Summer was followed by autumn and the weather became cooler. We suffered most during the long, early hours of Apel. Shivering from the chilly cold, we could hardly wait for the Kapo to release us from the lines. Some traded their portions of bread for a piece of rag. Wrapping themselves with it, they hoped to protect their undernourished bodies from the cold. Such actions, - if noticed by a Kapo, - were reason for severe punishment.

My poor mother was constantly famished, getting thinner by the day. The white, dry saliva in the corner of her lips derived from starvation, and the tormenting craving for food. The expression in her soft brown eyes turned saddest, when she looked at Agi, her youngest child. In her desparation and for the sake of her child she turned to Eva B. begging for some bread. Eva, who was in charge of the "Brot Kamara" (bread storage) listened to her plea, then left without ever helping . Later my mother confronted me with her worries concerning Agi's deteriorated physical condition. Since I appeared to be healthier, she proposed that we each spare a little piece of our bread ration to help Agi. My first reaction was anger. I scolded my twelve year old little sister for her physical deficiency. While I reasoned and argued she didn't say a word. She just listened quietly in her innocent, docile manner. The sight of her frail condition was heartrendering, and I started to cry. All three of us wept, and the tears of our sorrow were the seals of our unity. The word NOBLE is not adequate enough an expression to define my mother's genuine greatness. She was unselfishly giving, while hunger tormented her.

I recall an evening when my mother suffered from an asthma attack , in the line for our food rationing. She was coughing and wheezing as she was fightir for air. Her entire body was trembling from the strenuous breathing. The German Aufseherin took pity on her, and released her from the long line. She motioned to my mother, sending her upfront. Agi and I were relieved as she stepped out from the line and proceeded ahead.

However as soon as we got upfront, we were confronted with the terrible

facts. We were told, that the Stubendienst punished my mother for coming to the front of the line. My poor mother tried to explain her move, but the raging Stubendienst wouldn't listen, and the German Aufseherin wasn't there to confirm my mother's actions. They told us, that the cruel Stubendienst slapped my mother over her face once, and over again, until it turned red and puffy. Obsessed by madness the inhuman woman kept hitting and kicking her even while she poured the thin soup into my mother's bowl.

I found my mother sitting on the edge of her pritch, the bowl of soup beside her. I can vividly see her dear, gentle face as she sat there waiting for us. She never touched her food until she made sure, that we received our ration too. She didn't complain about her misfortune, and the painful harsh beating she had endured. Her thin pale face was swollen and bruised. Her sad eyes expressed all the physical and emotional pain within her. This was a very sad evening for us! My heart was filled with enormous hate and anger against the German nation, and I cursed the rest of a decadent world equally.

After a day's work we usually returned to our block to receive our food ration. But tonight it was different. This evening we were ordered to line up for a "Special Apel". Immediately we sensed trouble, and we became quite worried. Our perception was justified as a Kapo arrived and ordered us to stand still. "Achtung" (attention), she shouted in a loud commanding voice. We then were ordered to remove all rags, blankets or other cloth that we had under our dresses. We realized now, that this was a cloth inspection.

The brutal Kapos attacked us in their usual rough manner. They searched us one by one, and the guilty victims were pushed aside. These unfortunate prisoners were severely punished later. The Kapos were inhumanely cruel. Their favored task was to mistreat the helpless prisoners. Obsessed by a demonic passion they tortured those poor victims. First they attacked their head, slapping and hitting it with their hands, and leather clubs. They wouldn't stop the battering until they saw blood merging from the victim's skull. Loosing their balance, these pityfully weak creatures fell to the ground. But the savage bloodthirsty murderers wouldn't end the perverted beatings yet! With their shiny boots they kic-

ked these miserable creatures , as one would kick aside a repulsive worm.

In a state of frenzy we witnessed as this horrible ordeal took place. We couldn't tell whether it ended, or would we be subjected to more punishment yet? Much later we were ordered back into the block. We were tired and hungry, and above all a very hopeless group of prisoners.

We existed within such conditions, encountering more suffering daily. We became restless and irritable through our personal miseries, and also by seing the suffering of others.

On a Sunday we were ordered for a "Special Apel" to view the hanging execution of two male prisoners. The entire front was filled with male and female prisoners to witness this special event. The orchestra, - always present on such gruesome functions, - was playing classical music. We were supervised by Kapos and S.S. guards. In complete silence we waited for the undesired procedure to start. "Achtung", swept the echo of a powerful voice through the loudspeaker. Simultaneously two emaciated looking creatures were led to the arena. The victims approached the platform, exhibiting themselves for a final appearance. A second later the execution took place. The limp corpses remained dangling on the ropes, as a warning message to the rest of us.

The orchestra was still performing, without any interruptions.I thought about the day of our arrival to Aushwitz, and remembered that the orchestra was playing soft classical tunes to us too! The master creations of famous German composers accompanied us through the dreadful selections, and through the final march into the crematorium. They were present through all dismal transactions of the hateful Nazis.

The results of fear, starvation and excessive work started to show on us. Due to our great weight loss we became weak and fidgety. Some prisoners turned into "Muzulmans", looking like living skeletons.

I remember one lady, who became such a "Muzulman". When I first saw her in Crottingen , she was a charming, vivacious forty year old woman. She of ten talked about her husband the doctor, and their mutual devotion to one anot her. On those days she challenged the possibility of being reunited with him again. We listened to her strong convictions regarding the significance of wil power, in order to survive this sensless , crazy war.

But now , many months later she was extremely weak. She seemed so tiny and helpless in her loss of weight. For a while she dragged her "skin and bone" body to attend the Apel, until one morning she didn't show up anymore. We found her on the pritch, without any spark of life in her eyes. She looked strange and feverish. It was obvious that she couldn't fight death any longer.

Later that day I went to see her again. She didn't recognize me anymore. Her small body was trembling restlessly in the final stage of her agony. She kept reaching out with her thin arms, as if she was attempting to grasp something. The painful struggle between life and death was like a dual of two enemies. It prevailed longer, as if her soul wouldn't part with her body, as if it wouldn't allow for death to enter it.

In the morning her corpse was removed from the block. The "Tote Commando" (prisoners in charge of the dead) carried her for a final ride into the ovens of the crematorium.

Those of us who were too weak to fight the existing miseries died sooner. The sick ones were taken to the hospitals "Revier", and from there they usually ended their lives in the crematorium.

The rest of us existed from day to day, experiencing constant fear and panik. Sometimes we heard encouraging news. Rumors were, that the German forces were weakening and loosing territories to the Allies. This ment, that the war would soon end and we would be free to live again. Eagerly we listened to such news. On such days ~~we~~ I fantasized about a world of peace and freedom, where we celebrated happy reunions with our loved ones. ~~We~~ I reminisced about our families, wondering how many of them would survive, how many of them did already perish? On those days we challenged the possibility of survival, and reassured one another with helpful suggestions. Daydreaming about freedom was an act of tricking ourselves into a few moments of extasy. Creating wishful illusions was an inspiration to some of us, - - - it enlivened me , it gave me strength.

In reality however our situation was very grim. We were victimized by the "Superiors" from morning till night.They harrassed us during the Apel, and during the food rationing. We were punished because we needed to relieve ourselves on the latrina, or just because we were in their way. Manifesting power and superiority was part of being a Kapo.

I remember when Max, the abominable Kapo struck me over my head for no reason at all. The unexpected blow was so powerful, that I honestly heard bells ringing. I was unstable, as I swayed back into the block.

Some of the female Kapos and Blockeltestes etc. were intimately involved with male prisoners of similar status. Most of these men were Gentile political and criminal prisoners serving time in concentration camps. They usually wore civilian clothing, and had the rare privilege of unlimited movement through the camp. Whenever they visited their "girlfriends" they brought them cigarettes, food and sometimes also newspapers.

Max was the most dreadful Kapo of Stutthof. He was known for his extreme cruelty and brutality. We all feared and hated him. His sweetheart was M. ------ a native of my hometown Ungvar. Her appearance was the picture of good health and contentment. We watched with envy, as she circled the camp area, coming and going as she pleased.

I remember a very sad Sunday. It was a gloomy autumn day, the sky was heavily covered by grey clouds. We were sitting on our pritches, anxiously awaiting the call for the soup ration. M. (Mimi) was standing in the doorway, talking with her visitor Max. It appeared that they argued. Then M.(Mimi) walked away, leaving her bewildered lover behind.

We became the victims of his rage. To punish us, he ordered us out for a "Special Apel", kicking and slapping those within his reach. Even nature turned against us, as it started to rain. In no time we got wet to our bones. Our thin soaking dresses were clinging to our naked bodies. We were shivering from the cold and discomfort caused by the pouring rain.

M.(MIMI) dressed in her raincoat was passing by. We begged her to release us from this horrible Apel. "For G-D's sake, have pity on us" - cried out the women. "Why don't you ask G-D to release you?" - she replied angrily as she was leaving. Finally Irene ordered us back into the block. It was quite late, when we received our cold soup ration at last.

In retrospect I question M.(Mimi's) indifferent behavior on that rainy day. Is it possible that her careless, rude answer to us was a cover up for her motive to rescue us? Was she angry with G-D, because He was merciless?--- Or am I searching for exuses to defend the callous actions of one of us, am I protecting her because it is too painful to admit that there were Jews, who turned against their own kind?

We saw transports leaving, and transports arriving to Stutthof. All these prisoners went through the dreadful ordeal of selections. The sick and weak ones remained in a separate group, fearfully awaiting their fatal end. We often witnessed as they were carried to the crematorium.

The inhuman conditions and constant starvation made us edgy and irritable. The lack of hygiene showed it's shocking results too. Frantically we noticed the huge white lice appearing on our dingy clothing, crawling over our tiny bodies.

It was a repulsive sight and one more reason for punishment. We searched ourselves daily, killing lice after lice, hoping to control their rapid spreading, -- all in vain. Still, in one aspect we considered ourselves very fortunate. We were never subjected to selections yet. Through all those miserable months we were still together, working side by side. My mother, Agi and I were hoping to outlive this war. Weak and famished as we were, we planned delicious meals to cook once we would return home. My poor mother wanted desparately to live, so she could eat all those meals she had prepared in her mind. "It doesn't have to be kosher", she said, as she finished one of her many recepies. Even her asthma condition became more tolerable because of her desire to survive.

In the end of October 1944 selections took place almost every day. The sick and weak prisoners were left behind, and the able ones were transported away. We anticipated, that eventually we would face selections too. Shortly after one day we were marched into a large, empty barrack. We were ordered to undress, and in nude to line up "zu zwei" (two per line) for selection. While we stood waiting in the lines, we overheard frightful rumors. They said, that the person in charge of this selection was a cruel Polish doctor. He was extremely strickt, allowing only the able ones to pass his inspection. The unfit ones were sent to the crematorium. Their cries made us tremble with fear.

We waited in agony for our turn to come. I looked at my mother and my litt le sister, evaluating their physical chances for passing this selection. Agi was very skinny, but my mother looked worse than one could imagine. My poor, dear Anyu was emaciated looking. The skin covering her body was hanging loosely like a thin, shapeless overlay. Her head seemed too large to the proportion of her shriveled body. Her hip bones were painfully sticking out, - she was a living skeleton.

"When did my mother become a "Muzulman"? In my heart I shed tears of pain and sorrow as I glanced at my wonderful mother once again. Frantically I speculated of ways to save her. Like a fool I ordered her to perform miracles with her weak, emaciated body. I told her to pull in her loose hanging stomach, I begged her to stand up straight. She looked at me with her gentle eyes, making

every effort to comply. But the skin of her body hung loosely without any muscular support. All our efforts were useless, and I realized that nothing could prevent us from being separated.

How can I face up to the likely separation? Endless questions went rapidly through my mind, - endless reasonings were the silent answers. The debate between my conscience and the selfish desire to live was confusing me.

"What should I do if they separate us? Should I follow her to the ultimate end, as a brave gesture of her loyal child?"

"But I don't want to end my life in the ovens of the crematorium. I want a chance to survive, I need to live again".

"If she leaves with the sick and weak ones, would she feel betrayed by me? What would she think of me in her final moments of life, - what would I think of myself for the rest of my life?"

Such confusing thoughts were attacking my mind and soul. Helplessly I turned to G-D with a silent prayer.

It was almost our turn, when we heard of the wonderful news. The insensitive Polish doctor was replaced by a Chechoslowakian man. This doctor was kind and compassionate. In no time I came face to face with this great man. When I passed the inspection I waited for Anyu and Agi, who were next in line. My mother greeted him in Chesh language. She told him that we were her children her only family. He looked at her sadly, examining the frail condition of her health. In spite of all the negative odds, he let the three of us proceed to the right side. My prayers were answered, but the miracle only lasted one month longer.

After selection we marched to the washroom for disinfection. Our filthy grey dresses were replaced by other rags, left behind by former prisoners. We were moved into a large barrack near the warehouse, and remained there for several days. During this time we didn't work, and weren't bothered with any Apel calls. In the daytime we congregated in front of the barrack, talking to one another, musing about our destiny.

We were aware, that Stutthof started to evacuate the prisoners. Groups of people were leaving daily, and we were waiting for our turn. Rumors were, that the war would soon end. We were daydreaming about the liberating army marching into Stutthof to rescue us.

In the end of December our fate was finally resolved. December is the month of joy and giving, filled with wonderful expectations for a coming new year. December of 1944 was chilly and hopeless, inflicting us with starvation and death.

On December 31st we were alarmed by S.S. men, ordering us out for a "Special Apel". Some rushed out instantly, while some of us were hesitant and remained behind. In no time we noticed Herr Zimmer taking command on the group waiting outside. He was leading them toward the warehouse. We ran out to join them, but the S.S. stopped us with their leather clubs. They were whipping us and pushing us back into the barrack. We sadly realized, that we became the victims of our own foolish choice. We were moved into another barrack to spend a last night together. We were restless and couldn't fall asleep. We blamed ourselves and one another for our senseless actions. How we envied those who remained with Herr Zimmer! We found a chunk of stale cheese. Although it was swormed by worms, we eagerly reached for it anyway. We shared it, throwing the repulsive worms aside.

Next day we were rushed out again. It was a very cold winter morning, and the scenery of Stutthof was terribly grim. The barracks in the view were dark and empty. The hollow stillness was playing scary tricks with our weak nerves. As if the prisoners had been replaced by frightful ghosts, I heard the echo of their

cries and sufferings. We experienced anguish and enormous fear.

"Zu zwei", shouted the S.S. Aufseherin, ordering us to line up for the final selection. We were starting the two in a row formation, frantically complying with her order. I was holding Agi's hand, and my mother was joined by another woman. Someone was passing around red coloring paper to liven up our pale faces with. I grabbed the paper and applied it to Anyu's sunken cheeks. I was desparately rubbing her colorless, skinny face, hoping to deceive the Aufseherin. The selection proceeded, and we were moving ahead. In no time Agi and I were motioned to the right side, while our mother was sent in the opposite direction toward an empty barrack. We watched as she was slowly moving ahead. She proceeded to the fence, so she could see us for the last time. Agi and I had each other, but Anyu was all by herself . We sent to her words of hope and encouragement, and she responded with words of concern and love. In the midst of ultimate despair, in the final moments of this painful separation we were planning our reunion. Those were our messages, our mutual resolutions. Anyu remained standing near the fence, until we left. We knew, that we were leaving her forever behind.

My mother's silhouette behind the wired fence remains deeply engraved in my heart, symbolizing cruelty, injustice and infinite hopelessness that the German nation inflicted upon us. And the world of that savage era was equally guilty, because it was oblivious to our cries, our grieves , our enormous sufferings.

My mother wanted very much to survive the war, so she could see her family again. She believed that behind this cruel inhuman war there was a loving world, waiting to embrace us. She tolerated hunger, feeding herself with hope. But now, at the age of fortyfour her life ended. Abandoned by others, left without food they died the slow, agonizind death of starvation.

JANUARY 1945, EVACUATION FROM STUTTHOF.

We marched toward the entrance gate of Stutthof. On our way we came across with frozen corpses laying scattered on the snowy ground. I remember the startling sight of a young girl, as she was freezing to death. Her head was moving in a slow agonizing motion, while the rest of her body was burried in the deep white snow. It appeared that she was glazing into a form of ice. Her blue eyes were fixed into an invisible sphere, and she was muttering incoherent sounds, She was slowly slipping into the mysterious darkness of death.

We waited for hours, experiencing fear, cold and hunger. Stutthof seemed empty, except for a group of male prisoners. Dressed in warm clothing, they appeared strong and healthy. They were Gentile men, inprisoned for political and other reasons. One of them shared his concern and courage with us. In a broken German, he reassured us, that the war will end any day. He continued to boost our spirits, saying:" Jewish women, don't give up! You are the heroines of a future era, where Jews will be honored with love and respect. To be a Jew will be a gratifying experience, you will see it."

We questioned him about our iminent situation, but he had no answers, just a we couldn't forsee that we would march endlessly through the frozen rugged roads of German territory.

In the afternoon we received our bread ration, and "zu funf" we started our "journey" into the unknown. Day by day, week after week we just kept marching on. The clothes we wore were hardly a protection against the bitter cold of winter. Our wooden clogs kept sliding off our bare feet, as we struggeled to move along with the cruel, fearful S.S. If one of us fell and couldn't get up in a hurry,the guard gave only one warning. He counted to three, EINS, ZWEI, and when he said DREI, he pulled the trigger of his gun aiming it at the unfortunate victim. Throu such frightening experiences we quickly learned never to stop, never to rest up. Day by day, kilometer after kilometer we dragged our weak, freezing bodies ahead. In the evening we stopped for rest, spending the night in barns. In the dark I turned to G-D with a prayer, asking for strength so we could go on the following day. I was thinking of those who couldn't keep up with the rest of us, because

their leggs collapsed. They were mercilessly shot, their bleeding bodies surrendering to the unfair call of death.

I often thought about my mother and her frail physical condition. I knew, that she wouldn't have been able to endure this stressful march. I visualized myself pleading with her to continue walking, realizing all the while that she couldn't go on any further. As we were marched on I saw a middle aged woman fall onto the slippery road. Her young daughter bent over her mother's body, pleading with her to rise. I can still hear her trembling voice as she cried out: "Mama, please get up!" She tried to pull her mother up with all her might, while her mother pleaded with her to go on without her, and try to save her own young life. At this time the S.S. guard became aware of this incidence. It was not long before he raised a rifle, aiming it directly at the mother. He pulled the trigger and shot her at once. The blood from her body spilled onto the pure white snow. The young girl was then pushed along by the same unsensitive S.S. man. Although her leggs moved ahead mechanically, her face and emotions bore the burden of tremendous pain filled with the loss of her mother.

As I watched this scene take place, I thought about my mother. Ironically, as much as I missed her, I was grateful to G-D for sparing us from experiencing such trauma.

The day was ending and we stopped for rest in a farm storage room. That evening we came face to face with a few German families and their obnoxious children. The strenuous march and lack of food showed it's results on us. We were getting weaker by the day. Yet some of us kept our hopes alive, while others became totally oblivious.

One day during our march the weather became unbearable. The strong wind and constant snowing made it difficult for us to move ahead. The S.S. men became engrossed with shooting in every direction, executing all those who couldn't go on anymore. It seemed that the severe snow blizzard drove them to be more violent yet Horrified I struggeled ahead, fighting the turbulent wind with all my might. While I kept marching on, suddenly I realized that Agi wasn't at my side. Wearily I dragged myself near her,urging her to move on. But she wouldn't move, and wouldn't

respond to my desparate pleas. The thought of being shot petrofied me. I wasn't ready to die, - not yet! Whenever I faced such situations, I became terribly anxious. As always, the usual thoughts of reasoning were rapidly forming in my mind.

"If I sacrifice my life to remain with Agi, the S.S. will shoot both of us. If I continue to march on without her, my guilt feelings will kill me."

"You can't win", - my conscience was arbitrating, - "either way, you would both die."

I grabbed Agi's little hands and dragged her dear, tiny body along with me. Was I rescuing her life, or was I striving to save my own? I don't know! The fact remains, that we both survived that horrible "doomsday", and I was relieved that she was at my side as we stopped for rest in another barn.

Dear G-D! How did we exist for weeks, and months tortured by cold, hunger and ultimate fear?

I recall one evening as we reached another farm location to spend the night i Agi and I spotted a bottle filled with white liquid. Assuming it was milk, we drank it all up. It wasn't until later, that we thought of the possibility that w may have drank poison. That night we both fell asleep frightened, uncertain whether we would awaken in the morning. We did, we were alive the following day to co tinue our miserable " journey".

One day we reached the outskirts of the city Danzig. It was a nice sunny win ter day, the streets were busy with heavy traffic. People were running in and out of their homes, carrying suitcases and other packages along with them. They were then placing their belongings into cars and horse driven wagons. We spotted a pai filled with marmelade near an unattended wagon. Hurriedly we dipped our fingers into the thick jam, savoring the delicious sweat taste. Dancig was evacuating the citizens, and we the miserable homeless prisoners were marching without purpose, or goal.

I am musing about a special Sunday. It was a special day, because the guards decided to stop for an entire day of rest. Was it February, or maybe March I don't know, because we lost track of time by now. But I still remember, that the weather was pleasant and the sun was shining in the clear, blue sky.

We were happily forming lines for the food ration, that was provided by the villa farmers for us. When Agi and I reached the front of the line, we saw all kind of leftover food thrown together in a huge round container. The broken slices of sta- le bread, soggy vegetables and rotten fruit looked like feeding for the pigs, but to us it was a feast. The food ration wasn't divided into equal portions. Some go a bigger share, others weren't as lucky. I was among the less fortunate ones, bu Agi was given a nice big portion of bread. I was overjoyed watching the triumphan smile on her face, as she held up the ration showing it to me. Suddenly, like a wild animal invading her prey a Polish girl attacked Agi. In no time she was bru- tally shoving her to the ground, grabbing the precious chunk of bread away. Our pleadings and cries were ignored by her. Just as she tried to run away, an S.S. guard appeared at the scene. I was hoping, that he would order her to return the bread to Agi. But his motives were different! Without a single word he struck the girl, whipping her violently all over her body. The beating forced the chunk of bread out of her hand, and onto the ground. The blood from her body soaked into the bread, that was left untouched by either one of us. When the S.S. finally let go off her, she picked herself up and went into the barn. I felt resentment to- ward this pityful girl, and enormous hate toward the inhuman S.S.

How did I survive, while others were dying daily?

We didn't know how many days, weeks or months went by. We were too disor- iented to perceive what day it was, - and it didn't really matter. The only sig- nificant day would be the day of liberation, the day of survival.

As time went on, it appeared that the guards grew tired and restless too. We noticed that several new soldiers of the Wermacht unit arrived, to replace th S.S. ones. We marched at a slower speed, and they harrassed us less. We weren't punished if we rested up for a minute or two.

Agi and I pulled ourselves along, hardly exchanging a word. We were physic ally and emotionaly exhausted from constant stress. We were so hungry, that once we actually approached a Wermacht guard, begging for any little food. Although he ignored our pleas, he shared his emotions with us. He told us, that he was

cold and hungry too, and that he also missed his home and his family. He said, tha he was tired of this war, and it's endless miseries.His tone of voice, and grieving words reassured us, that the war was indeed nearing it's end.

One day during our march we came across with corpses of male prisoners, laying scattered on the snow covered road. Their distorted faces were beyond human recognition, shocking us with fear. I was thinking about my father and Mickey, wondering about their whereabouts. Or was I haunted by the frightening possibility questioning if one of those grotesque, emaciated faces may be them?

The road beyond us covered by pure white snow appeared to stretch for miles and miles. Struggeling ahead in our pityful condition we yet made it to KOLKO - GNEWIN. It was dark when we settled in the barn for another night of rest. I tried to sleep, but the countless thoughts pieling up in my mind kept me wide awake. I was contemplating whether we would be able to move on the following day, since we were terribly weak now. I was envious of those, who were tough and I wished, that Agi and I would be stronger too.

I was reminiscing in the dark, recalling the past months of our turbulent march. With resentment in my heart I remembered the "pure, aryan" German children They attacked us, the miserable ones, cursing and shouting "Ferfluchte Jude" (damned Jew) all the while. Those young monsters were pestering us, spitting at us, kicking us. At such a tender age as they were, they already acquired the skill of hatred against the inferior race of the German Reich. I despised them with all my heart, and I abhored their parents yet a thousand times more. Where did a young child master the demonstration of ill - will, if not in his home? These little animals intimidated us with their arrogance, and we were defenseless to their outbreaks. I too kept moving ahead, not daring to wipe off their sputum from my face. I detested them, and I feared death.

I thought of another girl, who didn't fear death. She always talked about food, and her torturing desire to eat one good meal. This obsession with food finally drove her to madness. One day she pulled out from the line, and started to run away from the group. All by herself she kept running, ignoring the warning calls of the guard. In no time the Nazi soldier pulled the trigger of his gun, killing her instantly. Her choice to end the agony of starvation was accomplished, - and she paid with her life for it.

I was questioning the motive of her courage ; was she brave, or was she confused? In my heart I knew, that I wouldn't put my life at stake. I didn't think about real food for a long time now. During the march I conditioned myself to eat snow. I often stuffed my empty stomach with it.

When I finally fell asleep, I dreamed that I was at home, in Ungvar. In my dream I was in our outhouse, sitting on our clean, woodmade toilet. I was relieving myself, experiencing great comfort all the while. How very relaxing it was, opposite to the tiresome way of bending to the ground.

When I awoke, I experienced terrible cramps in my abdomen. I became alarmed, as I noticed that I had a severe case of diarrhea.

In the morning the loud alarming shouts of "loss, alles heraus" were heard. Those, who were still able to fight the battle of endurance hurried out instantly. As usual, the sick and weak prisoners remained behind. From the large group of several hundred women, there were maybe eighty of us left. Hopeless as we were, we never anticipated that this barn would be our last stop, ending the miseries of our long, forced march.

I felt an urge to get up and join the group outside of the barn. I begged Agi to pull herself together and come along with me. I was reasoning with her but she wasn't responsive.She looked weak and helpless in her body and her soul. I tried to persuade her, telling her that the war would end any day now. Kneeling beside her I played G-D, promissing her a great new life. I was tempting her with wonderfully crazy ideas, and plans that we could experience together yet. With her little hands she pushed me away, motioning for me to go on without her.

Once again the dreadful fear of death, and the will power for life were attacking my mind. My soul was torn between love, guilt and the selfish desire to survive. The evil shadow of death was frowning at me again. It always appeared mystical, terrifying me with demonic manifestations. Wings of blazing flames were it's weapons, enclosing the victims into the Kingdom of Hell.

Life is beautiful in it's glory! It represents hope and a future of sunny tomorrows. Life is a continuous motion, - death is an absolute rest. I knew, I had to go on. I kissed my little sister, then tearfully joined the group in front of the barn.

We lined up "zu funf", and Agi's place beside me was taken by another girl. I missed Agi, and I already regretted that I parted with her. Her sweet face kept reappearing in my feverish mind. I stared at the huge doors of the barn, visualizing Agi in a most horrible condition there. I sadly realized, that I was wrong to leave without her, and I blamed myself for my selfish decission. I felt agitated and distressed, because I failed my little sister.

Suddenly a wonderful thing happened, as I heard the loud shouts of the S.S. guards, ordering and pushing us back into the barn. The damned march was called off, postponed to another day. Did G - D see my sorrow and heartache ? Did He in HIS ALLMIGHTY POWER create this miracle to end my misery? I was overwhelmed by relief and deep gratitude.

I will always remember the contentment in my heart as I ran toward the barn. Suddenly though everything around me turned dark, and I felt lightheaded, and lost my balance. When I regained consciousness I saw Szidike (an aunt) sitting near me. She told me, that I had fainted a while ago.

I picked myself up, and hurried to dear Agi. I crawled in the hay, and settled down near her. My emotions of love were expressed through tears of sorrow and happiness of rejoicing. I clutched her small hands into mine, and in my heart I made a vow never to separate from her.

The definition of guilt is interpretted in many various ways. Some believe that it derives from fear, obligation, or force. My feelings of guilt were based

on love, conscience and much concern. To me it represented a strong bond of affection between the two of us. Being reunited with Agi granted me happiness in our mutual misery.

In the month of March Agi and I became seriously ill. We were afflicted by diarrhea, a killing disease of prisoners. Since it was a contageous illness it spread rapidly victimizing most of us. People were dying daily, because there was no medication available. . The only remedy to control the frequent flow of diarrhea was black fuel coal. The pieces of coal were broken into small chunks, and were rationed daily to the sick ones. Every morning we waited anxiously to obtain the portion of coal. We chewed and swallowed it, but the damned diarrhea persisted anyway. In no time we became so weak, that we couldn't move our limbs anymore.The straw beneath our aching bodies was wet from the non - stop waste of diar rhea. The dreadful odor all around was unbearable.

The doors were always open, and we shivered from the cold weather. With oblivion we gazed at the huge white lice crawling over our poor, sickly bo - dies. Our body temperature ran high, and we suffered from dehydration. We were always thirsty, craving for water. There wasn't any water available , the only liqui we received was snow, or a chunk of ice. Szideke supplied our needs from time to time. We were still given the daily ration of coal, in order to subside the contin uous flow of watery diarrhea. The corpses were removed each morning by the "Tote Comando)". They were placed onto the frozen ground marking the disgrace of humanit of the twentiest century.

I kept chewing the tasteless black coal in order to control the horrib le diarrhea. Poor Agi was feeling worse with each coming day. She kept her eyes closed, and gave up any visual contact with the ugly, unfair world around her. One day the sun appeared in the open doors of the barn. The warm, bright rays were playfully toying with my dashed hopes. It inspired me, and I turned to Agi, trying to arouse her spirits too. I pleaded with her to open her eyes, and look at the promissing sunny sky. I said to her: "Look, spring is here and soon it will be

your birthday. We may be liberated by then".

Just for a second she opened her eyes. In her sweet manner she quietly responded: "I am weak and tired, I will not have another birthday anymore."

Soon afterwards my little sister ~~really~~ died.

A FAREWELL TO AGI.

I will always remember the night she died. My little sister was unique in every aspect. She was kind, considerate and loyal till her last breath. Her departure from life remains a very special remembrance to me, and I will cherish it till my last breath.

Late at night she cried out pleading for water, gasping for air. She sounded as if she was choking to death. Frantically I searched for the ice that we kept for such emergencies, - I couldn't find it. Someone slipped a piece of ice into my hand, and I swiftly placed it to Agi's lips. I felt the rapid melting of the ice, as I held it over her mouth on her feverish lips. Comforted by the cold liquid she started to talk. The sound of her voice was strange and distant as if she was departing from us, - moving into another world, another sphere. She didn't fight death, as if she were among the Angels of Heaven, who embraced her with eternal love.

"For thirteen years I lived, then I died"- - came Agi's weak voice from far, far away. I listened quietly as she spoke to each member of our small family. In her delirious state she experienced a physical contact with them, as if they were near. I cried silently while she talked to our mother, telling her about the aches and pains she had endured. She asked our mother to scratch her itching back. She called Apu, reminding him to bring home the famous "haslerky" (mint candy) from the factory. She wanted Doctor R. to visit her. Then with a special adoration she addressed Mickey, her wonderful brother. "Mikikem", she called him with endearment "I love you very much". In your new white suit you are the handsomest guy on the Korzo (promenade)". She admired him and she told him so.

She didn't mention me, she didn't utter another word. She was exhausted, her body motionless and still. Her eyes appeared lifeless and shifted, as if she were dead. Terrofied I massaged her cold little hands, trying to revive her. Agi's gaze was focused into an infinite distance, and she was unaware of her whereabouts. As if she were in a trance, she didn't recognize me either. In my desparation I played the role of Anyu and Apu, scratching her back, rubbing her with ice, reassuring her, that I was near. Finally she regained consciousness. My little sister opened her eyes, glanced at me recognizing me.

I felt the warmth of her small body against mine. With great relief I listened to the sound of her steady breathing. She rested quietly and I was hopeful, that this was a good omen. In my "heart of hearts" I truly believed that the crisis was over and Agi would get better. Some time later however she slipped back into a delirious state. She called my name, muttering incoherent words. With her trembling little hands she tried to reach the unreachable, - -. She forced herself upon my body in a desparate attempt to rise. We struggeled side by side, as if we were in a combat to conquer the unknown. She climbed on top of my chest, and I became immobile under the preassure of her body. I experienced a sensation of suffocation, as she grabbed my neck in an effort to surpass the final state of supremacy.

I am remorseful that I was unaware in the final moment of her life. I only recall, that we struggeled side by side at the boarderline of life and death, until we lost consciousness. Or did we fall asleep simultaneously, and Agi's sleep lasted forever?

It was dawn when I awoke and found Agi dead. I will never forget the empty gaze in her eyes, fixed into the mystical eternity. The huge, white lice were crawling all over her stiff body. They were merging from her head, through her ears, and around her mouth as they were escaping from her cold, dead body.

Dearest Agi was removed from the barn in the morning . Her young little body was covered by a filthy grey rag. The corpses were placed behind the barn, onto the frozen icy ground. The disheveled masses of corpses were an outcry against the barbaric German nation, and an indication of an uncaring, ruthless world.

It is true, that the best among us died. Agi was genuinely good and unselfish. She was my little sister for a very short time only. Through those thirteen years she was sheer pleasure!

When I think of Agi, I visualize an angel of love and pure innocense.

In the sacred memory of such innocent Angels I am cursing the savage murderers of the German Reich. I equally condemn the "civilized" world of Christianity, for their oblivion regarding the persecution of Jewish people.

The day after, we were ordered to move on with our march. I tried to get up, but was unable to make a single move. I was startled, realizing that I couldn't lift my head or move my limbs. I layed flat on my back, as if I were paralyzed.

As always, the able bodied people left the barn instantly. We heard the loud shouts of the S.S. guards ordering them into formation. They were counted and ready to leave, while I was left behind to die. As I layed there listless, the doors were suddenly reopened, and I saw the group returning to the barn. They told us, that the march was postponed till a later time. It was a great relief to all of us who wouldn't have been able to endure more strain.

From that day on we were ordered to line up every morning for Apel. The stronger ones marched out daily, while we the sickly ones couldn't comply with such orders. But the merciless S.S. forced the sick and weak ones to also get out and line up. "Loss, loss alles heraus" (hurry out) -he was urging us to follow orders. With a hoe in his hand he was pushing and lifting the limp, helpless bodies. I was trembling with enormous fear as he bypassed me, and I whispered a prayer of gratitude, for he missed my body in carrying out his brutal punishments. However through the cries and shrieks of the victims I also felt the pain and hurt they endured.

I don't remember the number of days we spent in this barn, I only recall the ultimate hopelessness and morbid darkness within our hearts.Then one morning finally all our miseries ended.

This particular morning the guards didn't open the doors of the barn. No one was shouting the hateful words "Loss, alles heraus". To the contrary, the silence all around was frightening, arousing restlessnes and suspicion in us. We anticipated that something unusual was going on, but had no way of finding out. Several of the daring girls decided to get out and investigate. A second later the doors of the barn were opened by our own people. We heard their laugh-

ter of pleasure and outcries of happiness. "The war is over, we are free! "- - they were shouting over and over. They were urging us out from the barn, but how could we? We watched as the ablebodied left at once to experience their free dom. They walked out one by one, leaving us the miserables behind.

The happy cries of victory, the joyful celebrations of freedom created confusion and mixed emotions. We were free, we could start to live once again. "Dear G-D, I survived and my little sister just died.... I am free, and I am dying too", - I was musing in my confused state of mind. There was panik and restlessness in the barn, because we the sick people were left behind. We had no means to experience the precious feeling of freedom. More than ever I longed to live again.

Just then, as if from a storybook a fascinating vision appeared in the doorway of the barn. It was a picturesque sight of an enchanting soldier sitting tall and erect on his beautiful brown horse. Mezmerized we watched as he moved closer to us. His cheeks were healthy and vigorous, not pale and sunken like our, The smile of his handsome face, and the warm expression of his eyes reflected kindness and extreme sorrow. To me he was a prince, a fantasy prince from my childhood's favorite storybooks. He was brave, charming and worthy. To me, he was a saviour, my hero liberating me from the hardships of slavery. We couldn't understand the words spoken in his native Russian language, but the warm tone of his voice reassured us of his sincerity and humamness. We responded with mixed emotions. Some cried, while others laughed and applauded like little children. Some just sat quietly, with a blank expression being totally withdrawn. Yet, there was one common feeling binding us, we all longed to live again. M. neni dragged herself near the Russian officer. She reached out for his hand, wanting to express her gratitude. Unable to lift herself she grabbed his boots and showered them with countless kisses. Poor M. neni just couldn't cope with the reality of freedom. The officer had difficulty controlling his emotions as well. Tears began to roll down his handsome face as he tried to console her. She spoke to him, thinking him to be her husband. Her moods swung from highs to lows At one moment she would laugh hysterically, while at the next moment she would

cry with such anguish. Unfortunately her freedom and chance for a new life was limited to that one day. Not long after she died, - perhaps all the excitement was too much for her broken heart to handle.

The officer left and the doors of the barn remained wide open. I could see the snowy road traveled by the many footsteps of those, who had already left. I wondered where they went, and I was envious for not being able to go with them. I was free mentally, but physically I wasn't able to move. I yearned to experienc the sensation of freedom in every imaginative way possible.Suddenly I noticed a horsedriven wagon nearing the barn. I saw people getting on, then being driven away. I was fearful that only the able bodied would be taken, and the ill and helpless would be left behind to die. Haunted by this horrifying thought I feverishly started to plan my escape from this dark place of torment. I turned on my stomach, and using my elbows I inched myself like a snake toward the outdoors. Breathing the fresh air I began to feel inspired, and the desire for life was fully within me. However I soon realized, that my body couldn't function as my mind hoped. I found myself unable to sit up regardless of how much I tried. I continued to lay on the wet, cold snow , unable to control my bodily functions of the diarrhea. Within such miserable conditions I saw the horsedriven wagon return once more. I was certain of one thing, I wouldn't miss getting on it. With great effort I crawled to it's rear tires, then shouted for help. Two men picked me up, and gently put me into the wagon. I was watching as they carried out the rest of the sick people , and emptied the barn.

We were all driven into the village, into what I believed to be a huge, white castle. In fact, it turned out to be just a regular house in which all of us occupied the rooms. The Russian soldiers guarded us. I felt angry, not fully understanding their mission there. Why, if we were truly free, were we still being treated like prisoners? I spied a soldier nearby, and asked him in Chech language for some water. His expression was that of a confused man, and he remained unmoved by my demands. In retrospect, he most probably didn't understand me.

Only the healthy ones were free to move about. They rummaged from house to house, collecting whatever food and clothing they needed. Being unable to move I was without food or water, I layed quietly giving in to the torturing sensation of thirst and dehydration. I remained calm until I noticed a group of women filling up their stomachs with food. Feeling that I too was entitled to such privileges, I asked them for a portion of their food. However, they didn't pay any attention to me. Consequently I started to shout and persisted with my demands, until finally someone handed me some bread with some ham. I grabbed the food from her, clutching it close to my heart. I held on to it protectively, then hastily indulged in my first feast of freedom. I was gulping down big bites of the precious meal I was just given. I barely finished, when I experienced painful cramps in my abdomen. My entire body was aching, and the diarrhea became non - stop. My mouth and throat felt dry, and I felt as if I was choking to death. I developed a very high fever, and consequently became delirious. I slept most of the time, only occasionally being aware of people or things around me.

Yet, there was one pleasant incident that I remember well. I layed all alone in an all white room, when two girls appeared near my bedside offering me "Kavu" (coffee) in their Polish language. Not being completely alert I wasn't sure whether this was reality or one of my fantasies. However, I still recall feeling the sweet, wonderful warm taste of coffee on my tongue. It seemed to flow through my entire body and the sensation was so mighty, that to the present day coffee has a special sigificance to me.

It seemed as though I slept continuously. Occasionaly when I awoke it appeared that I was left alone, abandoned by others. This situation frightened me. One day Szidike told me that I would be taken to the hospital to get the proper professional help. I cried and bitterly protested against such a move. I begged her to let me stay where I was, because I was afraid to be left alone.

I must have collapsed with exhaustion, because the next thing I remember I was in a large overheated place. There I was placed into a tub of hot water. Around me I saw several more tubs with other sick people sitting in them. A young German woman was supporting my weak, limp body, while another one was washing me thoroughly with soap and hot water. They were rinsing my freshly shaven head while gently pouring a disinfecting solution over it. When they had finished, they checked all parts of my body making sure that I was free of lice.One by one we were carried out on stretchers, then were carefully placed into a white ambulance car. On our way to the hospital I was halucinating.I visualized a charming city, with streets full of food stores. There were bakeries with the wonderful aroma of freshly baked rolls and bread, fruit stands with an abundance of vegetables and succulent fruits, and countless other stores with their delicious offerings. I was whispering to the girl next to me, that the driver would stop and treat us with fresh rolls and red juicy apples. I revealed to her my secret, telling her that a package was waiting for me upon my arrival. My father sent me candy and cheeses and other delikacies. I was saying things that I wished were true.

Due to my serious illness (typhoid) I was running a constant high temperature.I lost track of time and was unable to distinguish reality from fantasy. I can't remember the arrival to the hospital or being placed in bed. Only when I became conscious and aware of things around me I realized where I was. The girl laying in the next bed was teasing me about my father's package. I was embarrassed as I realized that there wasn't any package sent to me, yet I insis ted that the nurse would let me have the "goodies" as soon as my diarrhea would stop.

My mental condition flactuated between reality and fantasy. When I fanta sized, I pictured a beautiful world rich in food, where people would never suff from famine. I would see happy people sharing in love, laughter and brotherhood Sometimes in my distorted vision I would see our home with my family in it. At such time I felt their presence , and I would talk to them.

I wasn't the only person experiencing illusions, there were many others. Pretty Sarika, a cute Hungarian girl was one of them. She was happiest when the handsome Russian doctor showed up for his daily visits. She imagined him to be a former boy friend of hers. She called him "Mark" , as she greeted him daily with a warm embrace. The nice, young doctor responded with affection and deep humane understanding.

Our frantic calls for the nurses were endless. We needed to be constantly provided with bedpans. The doctors and their staff gave us the best care possible , but unfortunately for some there was no hope anymore. After many weeks of great medical attention our temperatures normalized, and the horrible diarrhea was under control. Our frequent cries for the bedpans diminished at last. Physically we were still very weak, but in our spirits we were ready to experience the wonderful freedom outside the hospital. Pretty Sarika stopped greeting "Mark" with her ready embraces, realizing at last that it was our doctor visitin his patients. I too stopped talking with my envisioned family, and gave up the illusions of a care package that was never sent to me.

I vividly remember my favored nurse, Frau Brown. She was one of those German women, who wolunteered their services in the hospital. Her wholesome appearance reflected a combination of good health and wonderful humor within her. Always positive and cheerful, she spent countless hours at my bedside, inspiring me in my need.

On May 9 - 1945 I turned 19 years old. That particular morning Frau Brown surprised me with a birthday gift. With much gratitude I thanked [illegible] for her kindness, as I unwrapped the small package. It contained a mirror and a toothbrush, two simple yet luxurious items that I was deprived from for a whole year. I hadn't seen myself in a mirror in a long time, I could hardly wait to look into it. With trembling hands I picked it up, and anxiously stared at my reflectic I was hurt and disappointed, as I stared at my changed appearance. As I held up the mirror I was shocked to see a bald, pale faced girl with loose, long teeth staring back at me. It couldn't have been me! I remembered myself as being attra tive, with firm flesh and dark healthy hair. I felt ugly and humiliated. Was

it possible that once a pretty, healthy young girl could now actually resemble the image of a ghost? I put the mirror down and quietly sobbed , feeling sorry for myself.

While I was in the hospital, Szidi visited me frequently. We however had to communicate through the closed windows, as I was highly contageous.After many weeks of great professional care we started to improve. As soon as our intestinal problems stabilized we were gradually given more food. We were encouraged to practice getting out of bed. The first time I attempted to leave my bed, I felt dizzy and shaky. I was supported by two nurses, since I was unable to take a single step on my own. Just like a baby taking the first steps, I was insecure and unsure of myself. Yet each day I tried again taking a step,then gradually adding more. Every day I made some progress, and the time finally arrived when I was ready to leave the hospital. Although still quite weak, I managed to walk on my own when Szidi came to pick me up.

Only when I was on the street, I noticed that this place wasn't the small village I was liberated in. We were in a large city, named Wiener Neushtadt. We walked through several busy streets, until we arrived to a grey stone building, the boarding house of survivors. Our stay there was unpleasant in many aspects. The small rooms were dark and gloomy, the food ration given to us was hardly satisfying. The survivors who lived there, were constantly complaining about the lack of provision.

During the day I spent many hours in front of the building, observing the busy city life. I recall a specially serene Sunday- - - . It was a bright sunny summer day, the glorious bells rang festively, inviting the town's residents to church. The streets were busy, families were dressed in their best Sunday clothes. They looked happy and cheerful, exchanging smiles and friendly greetings with one another. With an empty feeling of hunger within me I visualized their Sunday meal. At the same time I remembered my mother, and the heartful generousity she extended to the poor and needy people. I was so famished,

that I found myself walking to a nearby home. I was knocking on their door, requesting from the people something to eat. All this seemed so natural to me on that day, that I did not even feel as if I was begging. I was pleased when I was offered a piece of their Sunday cake. As I was leaving, I questioned their motive of generousity. Were they simply moved by a religious spirit, or were their hearts moved by my emaciated appearance?

The few days we spent in Wiener Neushtadt were hectic in other ways too. During our stay there we heard horrifying rumors. We listened to the stories of women being raped by Russian soldiers, the same soldiers who once were our liberators. Whenever we heard the stamping sound of heavy boots, we feared that we would fall victims to these soldiers. We became panik - stricken, desparately looking for places to hide. We began to realize that although we were liberated from the hateful Nazis, we now faced a man hunt of another kind. We didn't feel completely free, and certainly not safe. We were homeless, frigh tened people. Shortly thereafter we decided to move on toward Ungvar, the place I once knew as home.

My heart was heavy, filled with memories of a happy past. My mind kept playing games with me, as to which of my family members would return as I did. With much sadness I remembered the young, innocent children and all the old people who surely will never return, for their destiny was determined very early in their imprisonment. Then I thought of the boy, I was once in love with. Was he alive, - would he come back to me? I daydreamed about a special reunion for just the two of us, where we would cry, and laugh from happiness of being together.

We were on our way toward the railway station. There were hundreds and hundreds of people waiting, all pushing and shoving ahead, in order to get on the train. Everyone was eager to get somewhere. We waited for some time, before we finally made our way onto the train. Every seat was occupied, and we stood for hours in an overcrowded cabin. The train was headed for Moravska Ostrava in Chechoslowakia.

We were exhausted when we arrived, but as tired as we were we

carried ourselves to the repatriant office. There we received our share of provision and a place to stay.

The Chech people were friendly and compassionate with us. We spoke their language, and were able to communicate with them. I stared at the young people strolling happily together. They seemed carefree and untouched by the evil shadows of the war. We on the other hand appeared quite the contrary. Our pain, losses and sufferings expressed themselves in our faces and our bodies.

One day I was stopped by two young men.At first I got suspicious and started to walk away.I still remembered the Russian soldiers, who inflicted so much fear in me. But their motives weren't cruel, and in no time I became relaxed in speaking with them. These Chechoslowakian boys reflected concern, good will and humane tenderness. Quietly they asked about the horrors of the concentration camps, and I answered their endless questions. I told them about the wonderful Russian liberators whom we admired. We only knew their great people, the high rank officers, the kind nurses and the caring doctors in the hospital. I felt, that they were our liberators. However, when I recovered and saw the Russian soldiers in their brutal actions attacking women of all ages including the weak camp survivors, - - my liberators became my enemies. Perhaps the long years of the war, perhaps their unfulfilled sexual desires turned them into wild savages.

Stephan and Jarda, - these were the names of my two new friends - listened intensely to every word I said. They kept me company through the afternoon , and remained attached to me much beyond that. Jarda, the tall blond one took an immediate interest in me. He became my faithful guide, as he protectively accompanied me to the boarding house. To my great surprise he visited me the following day, and the days to follow, He dropped in daily, and his warm eyes reflected the promise of an honest, true friendship.

During one of his visits I told him of our plans to continue our journey to Ungvar. He offered to come along , so that he could protect me.

He wanted to see my hometown, the house I grew up in, and I tried to discourage him in his decission. I reassured him that he was very dear to me, but our relationship should end now. We were children of two different religions, with very different backgrounds. His home was an established one in Moravska Ostrava, I was in search of mine in Ungvar.

On the morning of our departure Jarda was at the railroad station. I thoug that he came to see me off, but to my astonishment he got on the train with the rest of us. He didn't get off when the conductor's whistle indicated our departure. The train was en route Budapest, Hungary.

Sitting beside me, holding my hands in his, Jarda told me that he was in love with me. I looked at his dear, sincere face wondering why couldn't we be just best friends? It was in the train, that he kissed me for the first time. His approach was soft and innocent, free of any sexual demands. How could I explain without hurting Jarda's feelings that a nice Jewish girl can not be involved with a Gentile boy? My parents would have never approved of such a romance! Those were my inner thoughts, and I didn't discuss them with him. I was confused and worried. Without any further words, in quiet we experienced feelings of deep emotions within us.

Upon our arrival in Budapest the railway station was swarmed with crowds of people. They all had one common concern. Did any of us know of the whereabouts of their missing family members? As they held photographs of their loved ones, they bombarded us with endless questions , asking information we might have concerning those people. We stopped to examine these snapshots, but the irony was that in these pictures people were healthy, vibrant looking individuals. These people had hair, teeth and warm smiles. How could we possibly identify the corps like figures we saw in the camps to be the same persons in those photos? Unfortunately we were not very helpful, and the only source of comfort to these peopl was the knowledge, that another transport would be arriving soon. These people didn't relent. Daily they would return to the station awaiting for another group of survivors. Not giving up hope, they would once again inquire into the whereabouts of their loved ones.

We proceeded to the repatriant office, where we received the usual provisions and a shelter. It was there that I met with survivors from my hometown. Eagerly we questioned one another, longing to find out any information regarding our families and friends. Jarda remained on the street. I was so involved with searching out people, that I totally neglected to inform him of my whereabouts. This was the last time I saw him, as I assume he must have decided to return to Chechoslowakia after all.

After spending several days in Budapest we were anxious to continue our journey home to Ungvar. Traveling on the train that ran day and night was free to us. The only problem was how to get on one, since every train was always full. Everyone was shoving ahead without any consideration for his fellowmen. Safety didn't seem to matter. People took their chances, as they were riding outside holding on to the doors, hanging through the windows, or riding on top of the trains. Everyone wanted to get home as soon as they could.

Szidi was hurrying too, and I was hobbling behind her, trying to keep up with her speed.At the station the usual disorder was taking place. Crowds of people were pushing ahead, fighting and shouting as they were trying to make their way onto the train. Szidi was quick to get into one of the compartments, but my limping hindered me from catching up with her. Through the open window she urged me to hurry up, but I became entangled in the mad mob of people. In my desparation I started to cry. A man lifted me up and pushed me through one of the open windows into a cabin. I landed on the bare floor of the bathroom. I reached for the knob, and when I didn't succeed to open the door, I became paniky again. I heard a man's harsh voice as he was pounding on the door trying to open it from the other side. Finally the door was opened, and after a few minutes I found Szidi too. But I was relieved only when the train started out at last.

Looking around, in every direction around me I saw faces bearing the traces of war. There were partisans dressed in their shabby clad. There were foreign soldiers wearing war torn uniforms. All these people expressed the hardships of a long war, but none stood out so painfully as the group I was

part of, the abused survivors of the concentration camps.

We traveled an entire day. In the evening the train came to a sudden screeching halt. We became alarmed as we heard the loud, vulgar remarks and laughter of drunken Russian soldiers. We heard the anguished pleas and cries of helpless women being attacked and raped. We all became tense and frightened and some of us relieved our anxiety by crying to one another. Suddenly a Yugoslawian partisan offered me advice. He informed me, that the Russians were terrofied of sick people and they usually avoid them. He then gave me a roll of gauze with which to bandage my head. Swiftly I covered my entire face and head, leaving a narrow opening for my eyes only. I looked seriously ill.

I barely finished when the Russians entered our compartment. Pointing flashlights at our faces they were eyeing the women. The Yugoslawian partisan pulled my head into his lap, and I pretended to be semi- conscious. Even thoug I couldn't see at all, I sensed when one of them stopped near me. In his husky voice he ordered me to get up at once "devuska" (little girl). He pulled me up by my arm, but I remained motionless as if I were truly paralysed. I heard as the partisan repeated the word "bolnaja" (sick) over and over again to the soldier standing by. The soldiers evaluated the situation and then decided, that we were too unhealthy to be of any use to them. We then heard them to take leave in their usual coarse manner.

The train started out again, and before long we made another stop. Once again we were startled, but to our great relief we only picked up a few civilian passengers. These people shared horror stories of how the Russian soldiers were terrorizing civilians, especially the women. They told us accounts of women being raped in their own homes, while their families were unable to help. These soldiers would rape indiscriminately, regardless of age. If a male tried to defend his women, he would certainly be beaten or worse, - he would be killed. We were nausiated as we listened to these horrible reports. Indeed these Russian soldiers were callous, satisfying their animalistic sexual needs by abusing helpless women.

In time we learned that the Russian Military Comando was embarrassed by the poor conduct displayed by their soldiers. They encouraged civilians to report any violent occurance committed by the soldiers. They promissed just retaliation against these individuals. However, it seems that no amount of retribution could ever be sufficient to overcome the pain and humiliation endured by the victims.

The closer we were getting to Ungvar, the faster my heartbeat pounded I was excited, yet ambivilant about my return. I wondered about the fate of my family and friends. My memory recounted the versus of a prayerbook, one that were chanted during the High Holidays (Rosh Hashana). "Who shall live, and who shall die", - - and I thought of those loved ones who might return, and of those who most certainly perished. The anticipation of reuniting with my family and the painful anguish that I may never see them again was utmost in my mind.

It was a usual, warm summer day, when we finally arrived in Ungvar. The sky was clear and blue, the wonderful scent of nature was overwhelmingly magnificent. The tranquil surroundings around me brought back memories of my youth, when I was free to share in the beautiful wonders of life. My thoughts were interrupted by the sound of joyful laughter. I overheard the voices of carefree happy chatting. I realized that nothing had changed for the residents of Ungvar. Of course they were still jolly and playful! They were free to run,to laugh and to live as we were not. They weren't cut from life and placed in camps where the smoke and smell of the crematoriums lingered about, where the fear and sight of death were a natural part of our daily existence. My mind raced back a year to that summer day when we were brutally forced into cattle wagons. It was at this railroad station that we started our journey into the dreadful camps.

The train came to a final stop. In the view ahead I saw crowds of people, anxiously waiting to meet a loved one. Off in the distance was Mickey, tall and handsome as before. He hurried to greet me, and we embraced.

We were glad to see one another, and yet the moment I had so long waited for seemed to lack true emotions. It was as if numbness had taken over, supressing our sentiments. We instantly realized, that we were the sole survivors of our family. We had indeed forever lost Agi, Anyu and Apu. Mickey walked me to a house that he shared with three other survivors. On our way we hardly exchanged words. It seemed as if we had lost awareness of one another, as if our family ties had died. Or did we feel guilty of our survival, while our parents and Agi perished in the camps?

Mickey was socially popular, I was shy and withdrawn. We didn't communicate, and we never touched the subject dealing with concentration camps. Only in many years to pass we opened up and shared the miseries of that crucial time. Our mutual feelings of love and concern became stronger, as we talked more and more. Through one of such conversations I learned about Mickey's dreadful experiences, and his painful encounter of witnessing Apu's horrible death.

Ungvar without our family wasn't a wonderful charming city anymore. It lacked the security and warm love of the home and family. Memories of time passed played in my mind, and I longed to experience some fragments of my past. I went to see the house in which I once lived,

I walked through the backyard aiming toward the attick. Anxiously I climbed the tall wooden staircase until I reached the door. Inside the dark attick I envisioned my dear mother, pinning the laundered linen on the clothline. I recalled the melody of merry songs she used to humm, while she emptied the basket. But that was yesterday, - - a year ago - - - - -

Today I came to the attick in search of my diary. I looked for it feverishly, in every nook and cranny, but I was unsuccesful in finding it. I was disillusioned and upset! I remembered that only a year ago my diary was hidden within this very attick. It was filled with memories of my young, carefree years, wonderful memories that were now burried and lost forever. I remained in the attick for a while longer. I was reminiscing about my birthday, when my father surprised me with this most enchanting diary. It was truly a special book, with ele-

gant ecru color pages, bound in a luscious red velvet.

After spending some time in the attick, I returned to the backyard. I made a special stop near the brick wall, my corner of privacy. I gazed at the large red bricks where I confidentially scribbled my secrets once. Just one year ago these bricks and I shared cherished dreams of a happy teenager. The messages were still there, clearly visible but the meaning of those carefree words became insignificant now. I couldn't bring myself to go inside the house. I sadly realized, that my former home didn't reflect any sentiments to me. Without our loved ones within, it was just an ordinary building. Shortly thereafter I left Ungvar - Uzshorod forever and ever behind.

My past is now merely an unforgetable memory, to which I return in time of emotional need. I call upon my past in the hope of educating the younger generation of the inhumanness of humanity,- - in the hope that such attrocities should never be repeated in any living human race.

E P I L O G U E .

I am in my late fifties now, and it seems as if I have lived in two different time periods. The aspirations of my youth were never formulated. I remain filled with sadness and anger, that my life and the lives of those I loved were snatched from us.

And yet I feel fortunate, that I survived to have the opportunity of rebuilding a new life. I am fortunate to have raised a family of two wonderful daughters, who I was able to reach out to and share the pains and happiness of my past.

Through them, and their children, - - and on down the family line will our personal memories and those of the Jewish cause live on to stand tall to those, who continue to persecute in the name of a JEW.